

DN disabilitynow

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Still a long bay to go

DN CAMPAIGN



One in five disabled bays in car parks are being abused by non-disabled drivers, according to the Baywatch campaign's latest survey.

Among the "Big Four" supermarkets, only Safeway/Morrisons has shown any marked improvement on last year's results, with a seven per cent reduction in bay abuse to 19.4 per cent. This brings their results in line with Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda.

Of 584 outlets checked, which this year included more supermarket chains as well as hospital and civil car parks, 163 achieved top marks, with no disabled bays being used by non-disabled drivers.

Sainsbury's bay abuse was 18 per cent, beating Asda and Tesco, at 21 per cent each. But

none of them showed much progress on last year.

In the 2005 survey, carried out by Baywatch supporters and volunteers from the Time To Get Equal campaign, stores such as Kwik Save and the Co-op, as well as other car parks, demonstrated similar levels of abuse.

"No major chain is producing a satisfactory result", said Douglas Campbell, executive director of the Disabled Drivers' Association, one of the Baywatch group. "Supermarket chains and car park operators are failing in most places to control the abuse, thus turning away disabled customers."

The survey found that in 28 per cent of car parks there were no bays free at all for blue badge holders because of abuse.

Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), said: "I often experience this myself. If I cannot



ANDY PALMER

Store manager Rob Jarocki: "It's about perseverance"

park in a space I have to turn round and go home."

He said it might be possible to bring a case under the Disability Discrimination Act and recommended that frustrated drivers ring the DRC helpline*.

"If a disabled person went to a supermarket and found all the disabled bays were taken up by non-disabled people, then the disabled person could argue that there has been no reasonable adjustment made to allow them to use the store," he said.

Figures suggest success is often down to store managers.

Rob Jarocki, manager of one of the best performing supermarkets – Sainsbury's in Brentwood, Essex – uses several methods to tackle bay abuse.

He employs the company Euro Car Parks, which is responsible for the store's 21 disabled bays, and checks are done by trolley collectors.

Mr Jarocki also visits the car park two or three times a day.

"It's about perseverance," he says. "Customers abusing bays will be challenged."

DN editor Mary Wilkinson said: "The good individual results show that parking abuse can be stopped, if there's a will. Those who are failing have no excuse. Baywatch will keep up the pressure."

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Grass roots get political

DN CAMPAIGN



The campaign to allow disabled people to relieve pain with cannabis is being stepped up as the Legalise Cannabis Alliance (LCA) prepares candidates for the general election.

Further delays in a government decision on whether to approve a cannabis spray for treating multiple sclerosis and concerns over a major court hearing involving five cases related to medicinal use, have prompted disabled people to tackle the issue at the ballot box.

Chris Baldwin (pictured on the cover, photo by Mike Hemsley), who uses cannabis to relieve pain from a mobility impairment, is one of around 20 LCA members who intend to stand for election in May.

Further candidates, and an election strategy, were expected to be discussed at the LCA conference, which took place the

day after DN went to press.

Mr Baldwin, a seasoned election candidate, said he was more determined than ever to get votes since being imprisoned for running two cannabis cafés in Worthing, West Sussex. He used proceeds to subsidise a supply for medicinal users across the UK.

"When I was in prison my leg spasms got worse because I had no access to cannabis," he told DN. "They gave me liquid valium, Diazepam, but that turned me into a zombie, so I went back to the pain."

Mr Baldwin believes cannabis should be fully legalised, which would help protect disabled people and children from unscrupulous dealers.

He believes legalisation would also protect those who supply for medicinal use, three of whom were awaiting Court of Appeal decisions on their cases as DN went to press.

Of two others who were

appealing convictions for using cannabis, one man said the drug should only be permitted to relieve pain.

Reay Wales, who spoke exclusively to DN after a court decision was delayed in February, said: "I would not like to see young people getting started on it when they don't know what they are getting into."

But Mr Wales, who uses cannabis to relieve pain from chronic conditions, also said the appealing suppliers should be "let off totally because they have been helping people at no gain".

He and Barry Quayle, also disabled, will soon hear whether their convictions will be quashed.

Arguments centre on whether using cannabis to relieve pain on a continual basis is necessary.

Mr Wales said: "I don't like breaking the law... but I will carry on using cannabis as long as I can get it."

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Journo guide is hot off the press

DN CAMPAIGN

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is poised to adopt *DN's Hacked Off* guide (right), that advises on the language that should be used when reporting on disability issues.

In support of our *Hacked Off* campaign, which aims to increase numbers of disabled journalists and change the way disability is portrayed in the media, the union has already helped produce the leaflet. Disabled members have now said the NUJ should expect the guide to be used as standard.

The demand will be put forward in a motion at the NUJ's annual meeting in April in Scarborough.

If voted through, the NUJ disabled members council expects the leaflet to become the accepted style guide for all journalists in the union.

Stephen Brookes (above right), chair of the council, said he had no doubt the motion would be successful.

"This is important because



journalists need to be aware of the implications of their work. We're promoting it in a way so that it is not just another leaflet to be tossed aside," he said.

The news came as other media and government organisations approached *DN* about using the leaflet for training.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister requested 300 copies to be made available for staff during its Equality and Inclusion Week, due to take place at the end of February.

Amanda Rayner, event organiser, said: "While I appreciate this [guide] is primarily intended for journalists, it has value to anyone involved in communication. Policy planners still need to have their language correct."

The BBC has also approached *DN* about using leaflets for the training of its news journalists.

• For PDF copies of the guide see www.disabilitynow.org.uk/campaigns/hackedoff



THE WRITE STUFF

Tips from the *DN* guide

Say disabled

Not handicapped, crippled or invalid

Say has learning difficulties

Not mentally handicapped, retarded or backward

Say wheelchair user

Not wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair or in a wheelchair.

Say has... (an impairment)

Not suffers from, victim of, is (dyslexic, epileptic etc)

Say deaf or hard of hearing

Not deaf and dumb or deaf mute

Say has mental health problems or mental ill health

Not mentally ill, insane, mad, nutter or schizo



Top brass: Visually impaired student Ian Arkinstall is watched by enabler Darren Priestly as he plays a tune as part of *Live Music Now!*, an educational scheme aimed at bringing live music to people who might not experience it in daily life. A series of workshops and performances took place at Henshaw's College in Harrogate. www.livemusicnow.org

End in sight for extra air charges

Disabled air travellers have welcomed European proposals to ban airlines and airport authorities from placing extra charges on them when they fly.

The European Commission has proposed a regulation that would prohibit airlines charging disabled people for assistance or refusing to let them fly when they book tickets or at departure.

The move would also establish a "centralised charging system". Airports rather than individual airlines would be expected to provide free assistance for "passengers with

reduced mobility".

Luxembourg, current holder of the EU presidency, has given the regulation priority, hoping it will be passed before its term ends in June.

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is supporting the regulation. Policy officer Nora Bednarski said: "At the moment airlines are charging exorbitant amounts for extra services."

Bob Ross, who recently won a court case after Ryanair charged him to use a wheelchair, said: "They are acknowledging disabled people are part of society and not an optional extra."

Diabetic test climbdown

Thousands of drivers with non-insulin dependent diabetes have escaped being forced to undergo repeated medical checks in order to retain their licences.

Philip Bradbourn, a Conservative MEP, managed to overturn proposals in the European Driving Licence Directive, which would have meant they would only be permitted to drive with doctors' permission.

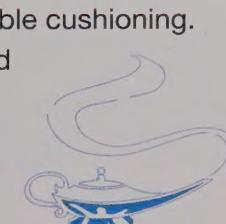
After winning a concession from the European Parliament's transport and tourism committee, he said: "The British system of requiring non-insulin dependent diabetics simply to notify the authorities [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency - DVLA] of their condition is a tried and trusted safe method of regulation.

"The last thing we want is some Brussels bureaucrat deciding who is fit to drive and who is not."

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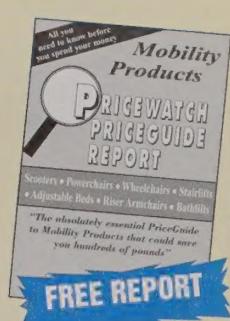
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Macmillan Cancer join winter fuel fight

Macmillan Cancer Relief has joined our fight to secure winter fuel payments for severely disabled people.

The charity's campaigns officer Katie Austin said: "We know that heating bills are a huge concern for people affected by cancer and are just one of the many extra costs they may incur after a cancer diagnosis.

Patients may suffer dramatic weight loss after chemotherapy and feel the cold more. They then see their heating rise as a consequence."

Macmillan paid out more than £6.5m in 2004 in grants to subsidise the extra costs of disability, of which more than £1m was used for increased heating bills.

The charity is now one of more than 20 organisations to join the *DN* campaign, which calls for winter fuel payments to be given to families who receive higher rates of Disability Living Allowance.

Ray Strachan, a 51-year-old voluntary worker for Macmillan, told *DN* that he and others who had experienced cancer would greatly benefit from an extra £200 towards heating costs each year.

Even with the support of Macmillan, he said people with

such chronic conditions "have to watch every penny" and could "do without worrying about how to pay the bills at the end of the month".

Having experienced cancer twice and with treatment including a bad reaction to drugs, Mr Strachan said he had spent a long time at home. "During treatment, of course, you have no immune system, so the cold is more of a problem," he added.

WATERING DOWN THE BILLS

As utility bills rise, charity Contact a Family (CAF) is urging families with disabled children to take advantage of a scheme that could reduce their water bills. Such charges are due to rise by 18 per cent by 2009, but CAF says that households with water meters can pay a "vulnerable groups tariff", which caps water bills according to the average used per home in each area. There are certain criteria that must be met. For more information call 0808 808 3555 or www.cafamily.org.uk

Film industry must roll with audio description

A leading film-maker has criticised his industry for failing to meet the needs of blind and visually impaired people.

Speaking at a ten-year celebration of audio description, organised by the RNIB, Lord David Puttnam expressed particular concern that people were not able to enjoy audio-described films from the comfort of their own home.

Criticising cinema bosses and DVD producers, he said: "You're making shit-loads of money. Let's have no nonsense about cost. There is no excuse for it. DVD people, I say get your act together."

Lord Puttnam, whose films include *Chariots of Fire* and *The Killing Fields*, said audio description should be a must in cinemas, not a luxury. Staff awareness, advertising and new regulations were vital, he added.

One user of audio description, Tim Gebbels (above right), agreed, saying extra information had changed his whole experience of going to the cinema.

"As a child, my father used to take me to see classics like *Silver Streak* and *Bugsy Malone*. I'm sure these are all quite good films, but for me, the wall of music and effects resulted in crushing, grinding boredom. I just couldn't see



what was going on."

Also at the event, RNIB members repeated their call for an increase in targets for audio description on television. Channels have been told by

Audio porn call dismissed

After hearing about *DN*'s ongoing investigation into sex and disability, concerned readers got in touch over frustrations that no erotic TV channels are audio described.

Kirin Saeed, who is visually impaired, said: "I would like to have the choice to say yes or no to porn. As a consumer, I'd say there were times you'd want to enjoy it with your partner – and there are times you want to watch it alone. For that, you need audio description."

But Peter Bourton, a senior

media watchdog Ofcom said audio describe ten per cent of their programmes, but only six per cent is achieved. Campaigners would like to see a 20 per cent target.

policy executive for Ofcom said erotic channels did not meet popularity requirements because most are on late at night and have such specific audiences.

A spokesman for Sky said it did not show audio described porn because third party adult channels are responsible for their own programming.

Miss Saeed responded: "It almost feels like people are saying a visually impaired person doesn't need to see that sort of thing."

Scots launch manifesto for inclusion

Disabled people in Scotland have launched a manifesto for inclusion that they hope will influence the policies of political parties and candidates in the forthcoming general election.

The document, compiled by Inclusion Scotland, outlines demands for independent living, access, human rights, social services and healthcare.

These include a call for a national network of accessible buses that would be introduced "well before" the present target of 2017, and a demand for disability equality training modules in every school.

Dr Ann Wilson, of Inclusion Scotland, said: "The disabled people's movement in Scotland feels that although legislation for many of our calls for action is already in existence, it is not being properly enforced."

• www.inclusionscotland.org, tel: 0141 887 7058

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Benefit worries worst for those with changing conditions

Campaigners have questioned how job centre staff will be able to judge who is fit to work under changes to the incapacity benefit (IB) system.

Following announcements on the overhaul (*DN Extra* February) disabled people and their representatives said they were particularly concerned that those with "fluctuating" conditions would be worst hit.

Under the plans, which according to the government will only affect new claimants, job centre staff will play a greater role in assessing people.

The aim will be to get most people back to work.

The government has estimated that 80 per cent of future claimants will be able to return to work, which means they will get a lower weekly benefit of £55 and only receive more cash if they actively seek jobs and training. The benefit will be renamed Rehabilitation Support Allowance.

Just 20 per cent of claimants, it thinks, will be considered incapacitated, meaning they can receive the higher rate Disability and Sickness Allowance.

This has caused particular anxiety for people with chronic but changeable conditions, including cancer and mental health problems.

Sophie Corlett, director of policy for MIND, said: "The majority of people with mental health problems want to return



Richard Max: worried about how assessments will be made

to full-time employment as soon as it is appropriate for them to do so. However, they need to be helped and supported in their return to work, not goaded and ultimately forced to do so. Simply causing them further financial worries is not going to help."

Richard Max, who has experienced depression for more than 20 years, said: "I am worried about staff making decisions, without having experience of or understanding mental health problems, and thinking that people can work."

"Sometimes, when going for assessment, people can have good days. Other times it can be bad."

Having had one job among periods of volunteering and training, he explained that his condition had meant having to give up any sort of activity at

certain times and not being able "to hold down a long-term permanent job".

At such times, he said: "It makes it difficult to deal with even the smallest of tasks. You feel isolated and withdrawn."

In their responses to IB changes, several organisations criticised the government for portraying benefits claimants as "lazy" in the media.

Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission, called for an end to such "incendiary debate" and demanded "a grown-up conversation about the measures needed to help those that can, get back into work".

- Lorna Reith of Disability Alliance comments on the changes, page 19
- Talk with others about the changes on DN's web forums at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Drive to find off-road sponsors

A motorsport fan has expressed sadness at the possible closure of the charity X-treme Disabled Motorsports (XDM), which is facing financial difficulties.

Phil Hughes (right), who regularly visits the XDM site in Snowdonia, where disabled people drive high-performance vehicles off-road, hopes new sponsors can be found.

He said: "I can't tell you what a liberating experience driving the Woodstar (a powerful quad bike type vehicle) has been for me over the years. I'm sad to think that more disabled people like me won't be able to experience the thrill of driving these amazing vehicles."

A spokesman for Cyclone Mobility and Fitness, which founded XDM, said rising



insurance costs and a failed National Lottery bid for a second centre had contributed to problems. He hoped a smaller lottery bid "to cover the cost of running and operating the

North Wales centre on its own," would succeed, but added that other donations were important.

- www.xdm.org.uk, tel: 0151 334 8815

Community call

The National Centre for Independent Living is calling on readers to get involved in a new campaign to ensure disabled people make their own choices over community services.

The centre is looking for people to recount their experiences of good and bad community services as it steps up its work to promote independent living to

disabled people, social service staff and the government.

Roy Webb, head of policy at the charity, said: "We want to see an end to the forced entry of disabled people into residential care. We'd like to see people supported in doing all the usual things in daily life."

- Alan Desborough, des@ncil.org.uk or tel: 020 7587 1663

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In brief

Suicide seminars

An Australian doctor is to hold seminars teaching people to make "suicide pills" so they can end their own lives. Dr Philip Nitschke, of the voluntary euthanasia organisation Exit International, said the move would prevent others from being convicted of assisting suicide.

Church compassion

A leading member of the Church of England has said there is a "very strong compassionate case" for allowing voluntary euthanasia. Canon Robin Gill, who has been advising on the government's assisted dying bill, said he did not think people should be prosecuted for helping their loved ones to die. He cited Diane Pretty's case in support.

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DN

Anger as woman told: 'Blind people don't do Valentine's'

A disabled woman's quest to buy a special Valentine's card for her blind husband turned into an insulting and frustrating experience, she says, after being told that "blind people don't do Valentine's".

This was the response given to Katie Brookes last month when she went in search of a Braille card for her husband Paul Brookes at her local Sainsbury's in Redditch, Worcestershire.

"The young man said, 'your husband knows you love him, you don't need to buy him a card', which is a cop out because then no-one would buy Valentine's cards," Mrs Brookes said.

She told DN she wanted to make Valentine's Day special for her husband after a series of unfortunate events in the past few years, starting with him being bullied at work and culminating in an accident last August when he was hit by a car. "He's been through the mill



Happier times: Katie and Paul Brookes on holiday together

recently and I wanted to make this special. I thought by now there would be people who had picked up on the idea of doing Braille cards."

"I can get the noisy cards which Paul will open once and throw away, but it's not the same and they are so expensive."

A spokeswoman at Sainsbury's central office said: "We would like to apologise

wholeheartedly if any offence was taken. We don't endorse the kind of views expressed by that member of staff and apologise for the distress caused."

But she added the company had no plans to sell Braille cards.

A spokeswoman for Sainsbury's in Redditch refused to comment on the incident but said there was a letter in the post for Mrs Brookes.

Kids' play plan u-turn

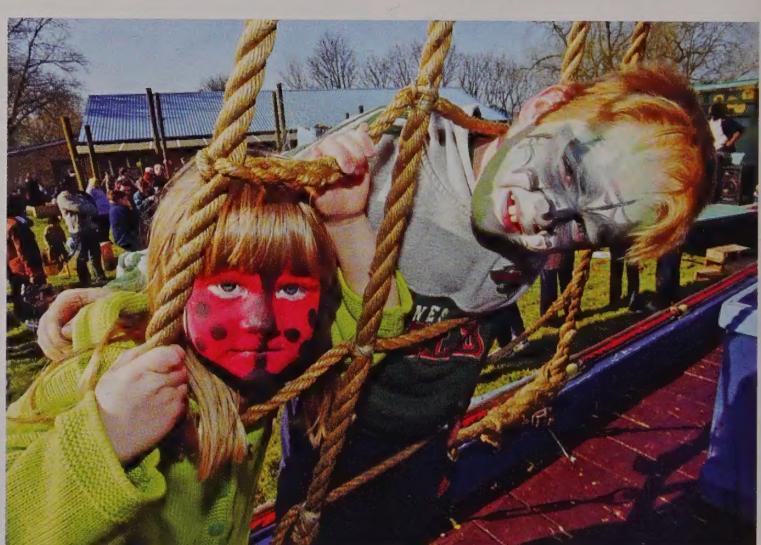
The government has been accused of backtracking on promises to increase play opportunities for disabled children.

The attack from Kids, a national disabled children's charity, follows announcements that funding, which was thought to be earmarked for play facilities, will no longer be.

The government had said that £200 million from the New Opportunities Fund would be reserved for children's play in 2001. In a review last year, by MP Frank Dobson, it was recommended that the money be used with "particular emphasis on the inclusion of disabled children and young people".

But in a recent u-turn, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell, said: "The fund will not have centrally defined, ring-fenced programmes but will engage more with local communities and respond to their aspirations."

Ms Jowell's comments, made in response to Mr Dobson's review, have raised fears that all children's play facilities will lose out. She added that while



Kidstuff: A government u-turn means there will be fewer new play schemes, like this one in Hackney, than had previously been thought

she supported an emphasis on disabled children, it was a matter for lottery fund distributors to consider.

Dr Sam Brier, chief executive of Kids, said: "We are extremely disappointed that funds may no longer be available to turn the recommendations into reality."

Joanna Ryam, head of national development for the charity, told DN: "Our questions are will the money actually go into kids' play and, sec-

ondly, will these new play provisions be inclusive?"

The New Opportunities Fund has been merged with others into the Big Lottery Fund, which does not "work to prescribed pots of money" according to a spokesperson for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. He added: "Any concerns that money will not be allocated is ill-founded. We are still very much committed to this programme."



Independent talk: Brian Sharples (left) tells Health Secretary John Reid how he has benefitted from services provided at Blackburn's revamped Independent Living Centre. Mr Sharples said he was particularly pleased to have been helped to settle into a new home by occupational therapists from the centre, which also provides a sensory impairment team and housing advisors. For further details, tel: 01254 269220.

School place pledge after *DN* intervention

The mother of a severely autistic child who risked losing her job because she could not get care for her son has secured a school place for him after contacting *DN*.

Adele Lawrence, from West Hampstead in London, raised concerns after having to postpone part-time work with a charity because her son Aaron was waiting for a place in an autism programme at a local school.

Care provided by social services had been limited to just eight hours a week and she had found it difficult to find carers who could cope with Aaron's behavioural difficulties.

Ms Lawrence said Camden

social services had let her down by not providing childcare respite and that she had been paying out of her own pocket for private agency care.

"They're absolutely hopeless," she said of social services. "It's all been left to me. I'm very angry. It's blatant discrimination."

She had also appealed to her local MP, Glenda Jackson, who told *DN* she had written to the council about the case.

Ms Lawrence was then told by Camden council that a school place was available, alongside speech and language therapy. "If it hadn't been for *Disability Now*," she said, "we could have still been waiting."



Mum Adele with Aaron

There was a very quick U-turn."

Ms Lawrence has also been served with eviction papers by her landlord because tenants have complained about her son's "outbursts".

The local housing advice centre has offered her long-term temporary accommodation.

Care reassessment sees support slashed by 100 hours

A disabled man's care has been reduced five-fold after losing a court battle against his local council.

Graham Baverstock (right), a wheelchair user who has several chronic conditions, took legal action following a reassessment that ruled his care should be cut from 120 to just 23 hours.

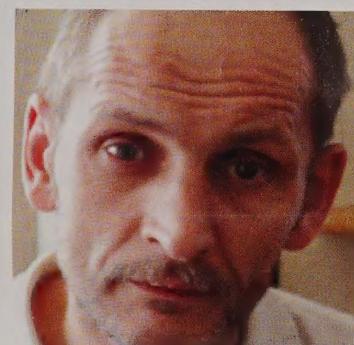
The move by East Riding Council will make him ineligible for support from the Independent Living Fund (ILF).

Mr Tress said: "It's a swin-

dle... they've always said he has more care than he should – but he genuinely needs it."

Mr Baverstock said he was considering taking his case to the European Court of Human Rights and has begun lobbying MPs at the House of Commons

"I believe in justice and dignity. I believe everyone should get the care they need," he said.



A council statement read: "We have always supported Mr Baverstock to remain independent and active. We sincerely hope we can continue to provide the support he needs to remain in the community and will seek to sit down with Mr Baverstock and his advisers to agree how this can best be done, based on the court decision."

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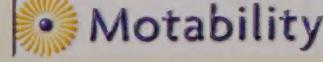
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Letter from Brussels

Richard Howitt

Ensuring money goes to the right projects will bring about real change for disabled people

The European Parliament has begun discussing how Europe's money should be spent from 2007. The decisions made will affect disabled people for years to come.

In negotiations on how to divide the cake between the now expanded EU of 25 member states, disabled people should be particularly interested in the European social and regional programmes that are paid for through EU Structural Funds.

These funds, the single most important source of cash for disabled people, can bring about real change and accessibility to buildings, transport, IT and communications across Europe.

By demanding that accessibility criteria are attached to the use of these public funds, European countries will be motivated and obliged to ensure that money is only made available to projects where the access needs of disabled people have been taken on board.

The Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament is

Richard Howitt MEP is chair of the European Parliament All-Party Disability Intergroup, e-mail: ep@edf-feph.org

campaigning for explicit requirements on non-discrimination and accessibility, and if successful, the move will have a dramatic impact on the poorer regions of Europe in particular.

These are the regions that benefit most from the structural funds and which, generally speaking, pay less attention to meeting the needs of disabled people.

Ultimately, all disabled people will benefit from the developments, as citizens become increasingly able to move freely across Europe, which is hardly the case at present.

The European Parliament will vote on the use of structural funds in June. Meanwhile, Euro MPs and EU governments meet weekly to negotiate.

The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for negotiations on behalf of the UK. We must succeed in harnessing the potential of what amounts to a third of all European spending if full access across the continent is to be achieved.

Westminster City Council's strict rules on where blue badge holders can park are confusing and resulting in huge fines for the capital's disabled drivers and visitors. Priya Kotecha reports

Westminster woes

A disabled woman is facing £300 in parking fines from Westminster City Council, despite using her blue badge to park in what she says would be legitimate disabled parking areas elsewhere.

Claire Glasman (right), a volunteer for the self-help group Winvisible (Women with Visible and Invisible Disabilities), has been issued with fines on two occasions; in September when parking in a disabled bay and in January while parked on yellow lines on a Sunday.

That fine was issued even though Ms Glasman had called



the council's information line and had been told there were "no restrictions on a Sunday".

Although Northampton County Court said the fines should be quashed,

Westminster appealed and the case was referred to the National Parking Adjudication Service. But the service does not consider disability issues, so the fines were upheld.

When DN contacted the council, a spokeswoman said: "Ms Glasman should not have been fined for parking in a designated disabled bay and we will withdraw the ticket. But for the second incident, if she was told that there were no restrictions on a Sunday then that is wrong. We will try and trace the conversation she had with the person who told her this and take it from there."

'Fakers' fighting fine

Two disabled men are threatening legal action against Westminster City Council over a £400 parking fine and a traffic warden who refused to recognise their disabilities.

Tony Tomlinson and Paul Burns were on a night out when they were accused of faking disability and possessing stolen blue badges by a traffic warden.

Mr Tomlinson told DN that when the police were called to the scene, the warden said the council "did not recognise disabled people".

He said the council later claimed the warden did not work for Westminster, even though payment has been demanded.

He has sent the tickets to the council as evidence.

A spokeswoman for Westminster refused to comment on the case without the parking ticket numbers.

"To say we are faking our disabilities is out of order. They think they're above the law. We're taking this all the way," said Mr Tomlinson.

AVOIDING A TICKET IN WESTMINSTER

The council has a "white badge scheme" for residents and employees in Westminster, due to having "a quarter of a million cars in the borough at any one time... so we prioritise certain types of car users". There are some blue badge bays, but unlike elsewhere parking on double yellow lines is banned, as is parking on single yellow lines during the week.

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Asian Alliance granted last minute reprieve

The Asian People's Disability Alliance (APDA), which faced eviction from its premises despite having no accessible replacement office (DN February), was given an extended deadline for moving as DN went to press.

After first raising concerns that the alliance's services would falter because work was not complete on new premises in north London, APDA leaders were given a four-week reprieve.

A spokesperson for Brent Council, which is in charge of the move, said: "We expect all work to be complete in time for them to move by 28 February."

Joginder Kundhi of the APDA, said: "We are still not happy to move but will do so if all work is completed in time. There are people depending on us. We are all traumatised by the events of the past few months."

• www.apda.org.uk
020 8961 6773/2

Charity payoff after banking nightmare

A disabled man has been so frustrated with inaccessible financial services in Preston that one bank has decided to donate money to his chosen charity.

Peter Nicholson, a wheelchair user who is blind, was told of the £500 donation to the Sound Sense and Vision Charitable Trust after complaining to Halifax about services.

His main problem was that the bank's automated telephone service is not designed for blind people so he must memorise his account information or enlist the help of a neighbour to use it.

Mr Nicholson joined Halifax in December after becoming disillusioned with services offered by his local Lloyds bank.

DAVID HURST



Peter Nicholson outside Lloyds

He left before the Lloyds Ashton branch in the town had wheelchair access, after being told he should have home visits

from staff. On a second occasion, he was escorted to another branch where he was expected to have a personal financial interview in a public area because offices were not accessible.

A spokesman for Lloyds TSB said: "It seems we did try to support him by providing the option of using other branches."

He added there had already been plans in place to build a ramp at the Ashton branch at the end of last year.

"Generally," Mr Nicholson said, "a blind person can't access the normal functions. If I go to a cash machine, I have to get a stranger to help. Banking procedures aren't adjusting and blind people have to take risks."



Simon Stevens (left) and Richard West test out a new technology for council websites, which will use eye-catching and easy-to-understand icons as part of the government's LOG ON initiative to encourage people to get involved in local democracy.

Mr West, who has learning difficulties, said: "The bold icons will help people with learning difficulties and people with low vision use council websites, some of which could definitely be more accessible."

For more information visit www.localegovnp.org

A thousand animals, but no dogs allowed in zoo

Zoos may not be required to accommodate assistance dogs under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), DN has found.

The news comes after a concerned reader said a group of his family and friends had been unable to enter South Lakes

Wild Animal Park, in Cumbria, because of a notice banning guide dogs.

Paul Peterson, a former zookeeper, said: "I find it wholly strange that guide dogs can enter a café or restaurant, or a butchers, but for some reason are not allowed to enter a zoo."

But David Gill, the zoo's owner, said the rule existed for the health and safety of both visitors and animals. "We do provide alternatives for blind people [such as human guides], but to impose the right of a person at the cost of safety would be irresponsible," he explained.

decide on his own."

A spokesman for Guide Dogs for the Blind said: "We campaign hard to make sure there aren't barriers in society for guide dogs. However we do accept that on certain occasions a service provider may have valid concerns and sensitivities."

Anger as parents forced to foot bill for school signers

A deaf father has complained that there is no reliable system for Cardiff parents who require sign language interpreters at school meetings

Campaigner Cedric Moon, a member of the Wales Deaf Broadcasting Council, said families like his own had been fighting for almost two years to get signing services paid for.

Problems began in May 2003 when the city council terminated a contract with the RNID to provide services without consulting parents. When families then employed RNID interpreters directly and submitted invoices, they found themselves out of pocket when the council refused to pay them.

Mr Moon told DN the council had failed to tell parents they were introducing an informal payment system, called "spot purchasing", details of which

are still to be finalised.

Some invoices have now been settled, but Mr Moon is not satisfied with the system.

"What happens in other UK schools?" he asked.

"The problems I've come across must be mirrored elsewhere, although we do know that some schools are happy to meet interpreter costs," he said.

Steve Phillips, corporate director of Cardiff Schools Service, said: "We will be consulting with service users when we have a clearer picture of the situation and customer needs."

But Sophie Howe, a local Labour councillor, said the council was in danger of not meeting its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Parents should not have been caught up in such unnecessary bureaucracy, she added.

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Cab catch

A disabled man is considering legal action against an airport that says he must use expensive taxi services if he wants to be dropped off at the entrance.

Businessman and regular flyer David Gordon, who uses a walking stick, has been told by staff at Nottingham East Midlands Airport that he must travel in specified "checkered cabs" to its entrance.

These cost him £40 from his home in Leicester, compared to private cars that cost £32.

Problems began when the drop-off point was moved and only checkered cabs were allowed at the entrance, meaning Mr Gordon had to cross two roads to enter the airport.

After being blown over twice while crossing the roads, he wrote to the airport requesting special permission to be



No entry: The airport entrance and (inset) David Gordon

dropped off as close to the entrance as possible.

A reply from airport services co-ordinator Denyse Hall, said: "The only way you can do this is to arrive by an airport taxi."

Ms Hall told DN: "The checkered cabs are the only authorised vehicles allowed to

cross the barrier. It is a security measure and department of trade regulation; there is nothing we can do."

But Mr Gordon said: "The suggestion from Ms Hall is revenue-motivated discrimination. I have contacted two solicitors who have told me I can sue."

New drive to open fire service

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association have joined forces to help disabled people work in the fire service.

The organisations have published guidance that promotes diversity and will help the Fire and Rescue Service meet its

obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

A DRC spokeswoman said: "The change to the DDA will pose a real challenge to the Fire Service, as it raises so many issues that have not really been thought about before.

"However, the last couple of years have shown that there is a

great deal of willingness to improve policy and practice."

- *Disability Discrimination Act – Part II – Employment, Guidance to Fire and Rescue Service Managers, www.drc-gb.org, 0161 958 2062*
- *In next month's employment supplement we interview a disabled fireman*

Identity theft worries mount

Clients of the Independent Living Fund (ILF) have raised further concerns about a theft of personal details that took place at its headquarters in December (DN February).

Stolen computer tapes contained information, including bank details and signatures, about current and past clients. Computer experts, disagreeing with ILF managers, said the data could be accessed and therefore misused.

Nadia Reif, mother of 22-year-old disabled man Jason, told DN she was worried about the possibility of his National Insurance (NI) number being

used to adopt a fake identity.

She contacted the ILF, which was "stand-offish" and claimed its systems were safe. "It is very naïve for them to assume they have such a great system that no one will be able to replicate it," she said.

A spokeswoman for the National Insurance Contributions Office said if people were concerned about the missing records they should contact their local Department for Work and Pensions who will pass details on to the fraud unit.

This will ensure NI numbers are flagged up and monitored for any suspicious activity.

£10 flight levy slammed

A £10 charge for a disabled man to guarantee he could sit next to his wife on a flight has been criticised by the couple.

Ian Holt is refusing to pay an invoice listing the charge, which was sent by Althams Travel, after he booked a Thomson trip to Malta for himself and Mo Holt.

Mrs Holt is his full-time carer and needs to sit next to him to help him with various tasks, including fastening his seat belt and opening food wrappers.

Mr Holt said: "It seems unfair that I have to pay extra because of my disability."

In the past, he added: "I have

felt embarrassed and humiliated having to ask a stranger to help me with things I required."

The Althams Travel agent claimed the company was following tour operator rules, but a spokesman for Thomson said: "In the case of Mr Holt, this [charge] should have been waived considering that it is imperative he sits next to his wife."

He added the travel agent should have contacted Thomson's disabled services helpline or given Mr Holt their phone number.

Mr Holt has written to the Disability Rights Commission.

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DN03/05

In brief

PM's Wright fight

The mother of a disabled child has challenged the Prime Minister on television over the government's failure to support her autistic child.

Maria Hutchings attacked Tony Blair when he appeared on Channel Five's *The Wright Stuff* over his policy of integrating special needs children into mainstream schools, which has led to the planned closure of the special school that her son John Paul, ten, attends.

RNIB kerb worries

Disability charities have raised concerns over plans in London to scrap metal barriers that separate pedestrians and traffic. Kensington and Chelsea council also plan to remove "special needs solutions", including dropped kerbs and audible crossings, and instead enforce speed restrictions.

An RNIB spokesman said: "This scheme is ridiculous and potentially dangerous."

Scrooges slammed

A disabled man has labelled doctors at the Wrexham Maelor Hospital "scrooges" after he was told that the hospital could no longer fund his communication charts.

Mark Williams has no speech and points to special symbols using the charts so people can understand him. Each one lasts two months and costs £5 to replace. His wife Rosemary said: "This is going to kill Mark; it's his only way of communicating with people."

Suite welcomed

Disabled people in Gloucester have welcomed a "state-of-the-art" suite designed with their needs in mind at Colchester General Hospital. Managers said it would "improve disabled peoples' hospital experiences" as it was opened by Paralympian Ann Wild. She said: "I hope other health care providers follow this example."

Corrections

- The MP quoted in *DN* February's story "MPs told to avoid spastic labels", was Tim Boswell and not Tom Clarke, as we reported.
- The photostory in *DN* February, about a video produced by the Merseyside Development Group called *Not that "different"...* Just treated that way, depicted Andy Yates and his daughter Katie, who is seven years old.

Just the job for graduates

Disabled graduates are being invited to join a charity-led work programme that offers six or twelve-month paid work placements as well as career training.

Josh Coe (left, pictured with programme administrator Johnny Akinbolaji), who is now a communications assistant for the charity Waste Watch, landed his job after taking part in Fast Track, Scope's graduate

development initiative.

He said he had "very few" problems finding work after participating in Fast Track.

His placements were at the Audit Commission and Sainsbury's.

- You have until 14 March to submit an application. To download a form go to <http://fast-track.scope.org.uk>, or call 020 7619 7299.



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Get digital!

A charity is urging people experiencing loss of hearing to take advantage of a national roll-out of digital hearing aid services.

While expressing concern over waiting times for digital hearing aids, Defeating Deafness said that "people who get a hearing aid while their hearing loss is still mild adjust better to using one than those who leave it until their hearing has deteriorated significantly".

Former musician Raymond Coleman (right), who has lost around 50 per cent of his hearing to tinnitus, has joined the charity's campaign after it took him two years to maximise the use of his digital hearing aid.

Mr Coleman contacted Defeating Deafness after problems with his aids. He said:



"Follow-up appointments, armed with the right questions, have resulted in much better programming, including good hearing for speech and group discussion and improved hearing for music." He hopes future users will seek the right information, so their hearing aids are "right first time".

Although praising government investment in digital hear-

ing aid services, the charity says waiting lists are too long, which is partly due to a shortage of trained audiologists.

But a spokesman for the RNID, which is overseeing the roll out of services, told *DN* that all audiologists in the NHS now receive training at fitting digital aids. By March all NHS trusts will have received their share of the £125m investment made available to develop full services.

An RNID spokesman said there has been a greater interest in digital aids than analogue ones, but that steps had been taken to reduce waiting times.

20,000 patients have been seen by NHS audiologists working increased hours and 50,000 by private organisations.



I'm a person.
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Cartoon campaign: Animated characters are being used in new posters and TV adverts as part of an ongoing campaign to combat mental health problems among teenagers in Scotland. It follows a new survey for the "See Me" campaign, which found that almost half of youngsters would not tell people if they were facing difficulties. The campaign aims to fight the stigmas of having a mental health problem and inform young people how to seek help and advice. You can find out more at www.justlikeme.org.uk

Osteoporosis drug rethink call

The National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) has called for certain drugs to be made available for young post-menopausal women after they were missed from recommendations on use.

Its demand follows the final decision by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) that drugs called bisphosphonates should be restricted to

those with proven osteoporosis or very low bone density.

Its decision was delayed from last spring after an appeal by the drug company Eli Lilly. The appeal was rejected.

The NOS has said that while it is "broadly satisfied" with much of NICE's guidance*, certain at-risk groups are not covered, including post-menopausal

women under 65 and some men.

Chief executive Jackie Parrington said: "The recommendations still allow physicians to use clinical judgement in individual cases. We hope that these women would still be prescribed one of the drugs, albeit outside of NICE guidance."

* www.nice.org.uk, tel: 020 7067 5800

Withdrawal doubts

Arthritis charities have challenged the government's reasons for withdrawing a drug that has been linked with suicides.

They say co-proxamol, which will be phased out over a two-year period, could be used more safely if messages about the risks were improved.

This would involve stronger prescribing advice and clearer warnings on packs, which could also be smaller.

But the Medicines and

Healthcare Regulatory Agency recommended that high strength paracetamol be used instead.

Neil Betteridge, Arthritis Care's acting chief executive, said: "The withdrawal of co-proxamol leaves many people with very few options for the safe and effective management of their pain."

• *Arthritis Care helpline, tel: 0808 800 4050, www.arthrtiscare.org.uk*

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Chip and PIN is the new, more secure way to pay with credit and debit cards. More than three quarters of us now have at least one **chip and PIN** card in our purses or wallets, and are using them in more than eight out of 10 shops across the UK.

Chip and PIN is being introduced to combat card fraud, which last year cost the UK almost £480 million. The new style cards do this in two ways; the chip on the card keeps your bank details secure and prevents the card from being copied, and the PIN is a secret-four digit number known only to you which stops fraudsters from using lost or stolen cards.

Chip and PIN will allow more people to take advantage of the convenience of shopping with credit and debit cards than ever before. However, not all people will be able to use PINs. If you have a disability and think you may have difficulty with chip and PIN you should talk to your card issuing company who will discuss the best solution for you. This may include continuing to use cards with signatures or other arrangements similar to those you have in place now.

Shopping using PIN

When you use your new **chip and PIN** card, you'll be asked to enter your PIN rather than signing for goods in shops and other businesses that have switched over to the new technology. Once people get used to it, they find entering a PIN as quick and easy, if not quicker and easier than signing. However, if it's the first time you've used it and are unsure about anything, do let the person behind the till know. Most staff will be happy to talk you through the process.

If you forget your PIN when you get to the till don't worry – staff will usually be able to request a signature as an alternative to PIN.

Safety in numbers

Some people are worried about being overseen when entering a PIN. This is only natural as it's a big change in the way we pay, and something that takes a bit of getting used to. PIN has been introduced as it's a tried and tested method of beating the fraudsters – when it was introduced in France card fraud fell by 80 per cent.

To make sure you feel safe, use your hand or body as a shield when you enter your PIN. Most PIN pads can be picked up, so feel free to hold them close to your body or turn away from the people in the queue behind you.

Don't forget that without your card, your PIN is useless to a fraudster, so even if someone sees you enter your PIN, they would also need to get hold of your card without you realising. And of course, before **chip and PIN** was introduced all fraudsters needed to do once they had your card was practice your signature a few times, and start shopping at your expense. Whereas it is relatively simple for a criminal to forge a signature, the chances of them guessing a PIN are 10,000 to one.

Using a PIN is far safer than signing for goods, and gives all of us more protection, and makes our cards much less attractive to the fraudster. If you have any queries or questions about using your **chip and PIN** cards, call your bank or card issuer.

For more information on **chip and PIN** please visit our website [www\(chipandpin.co.uk/consumer/disabledusers.html](http://www(chipandpin.co.uk/consumer/disabledusers.html)) or email us, disabilityinfo@chipandpin.co.uk



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3. For a PIN transaction, follow the prompts on the PIN pad screen. Check the amount and enter your four-digit PIN before pressing the ENTER key when asked to confirm the payment.
4. The PIN is not displayed, instead you will see asterisks on screen (****).
5. If you make a mistake, press clear, and re-enter your PIN.
6. In restaurants and bars where tipping is common, you may be asked if you would like to enter a tip amount and agree the new total including a tip before entering your PIN.
7. The screen will show you if the transaction has been verified, and you will be issued with a receipt as normal.
8. When paying for petrol disabled drivers who are unable to get out of their vehicle on the forecourt will be able to sign – although they may use PIN in all other places



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In 2025 will our children

Last month in *DN*, we reported on the government's promise to establish full independence for disabled people within 20 years. Its report, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, said that by focussing on key stages during a disabled person's life "full opportunities and choices" could be made available, leading them to become "equal members of society" by 2025. Leaders in the disability field tell *DN* if they think the ambitious plans will enable tomorrow's adults to thrive as they should.

'A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve citizenship rights'
— Liz Sayce, DRC

Liz Sayce writes: Something strange is afoot. The government seems to have adopted the definition of independent living as understood by much of the disability movement – that is, all disabled people having the same choice, control and freedom as other citizens. And it has become serious about increasing the employment rate of disabled people from the current paltry figure of 50 per cent.

Should we celebrate, attack the proposals or be suspicious? The DRC believes we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve citizenship rights, but only if disabled people and their organisations collectively hold the government to account for practical delivery of its recommendations.

The report matters as it shifts policy debate on disability from talk of vulnerable people at risk, in need of protection, to citizens who require, and should get, equal life chances. It could shift the balance of power so



Looking to the future: Will today's disabled youngsters enjoy a more equal world than their parents?

disabled people can be managers of their own lives.

It is the first major report asking departments across government to work to deliver opportunities for disabled people, going beyond providing care or special programmes and instead mainstreaming disability equality into education, employment and housing.

At best, it means disabled

people could be recognised and supported as major contributors to society.

Wild optimism? Perhaps. Some previous cross-government reports have crumbled into nothing.

But suspicion of the report could act as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we spend too much time focussing on the gaps in the document, we may miss the opportunity of a lifetime to turn prime minister-level support for independent living into delivery.

Some arguments against the report risk degenerating into old debates that go nowhere. For instance, the claim that the report offers too little to older people.

But are we seriously saying independent living is not useful to older people? Ask any older disabled person waiting to see whether, or when, the seventeenth different care assistant sent that month will actually turn up, and then see whether independent living and control over personal services matter. It is also said that the report values employment above other forms of contribution.

The biggest risk in relation to this report is that it will not be vigorously implemented. Disability organisations should challenge the specifics in it – whilst championing it and forcefully demanding its implementation.

Otherwise the government will have adopted the disability movement's language but not delivered on its substance.

• *Liz Sayce is director of policy and communications at the Disability Rights Commission*

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING

Early years and family support

- Extension of personal budgets to families with disabled children
- Key workers to support families' use of services
- From 2005, review of disabled facilities grant to ensure housing needs of families with disabled members are met
- By 2006, equipment and wheelchair services will be assessed for efficiency

Transition to adulthood

- Personal budgets
- By 2006, Family Fund will be extended to include families with 16 and 17-year-olds, as well as young adults moving into independent living

Employment

- By 2006, personal advisers at Jobcentre Plus centres will advise on how benefit system can support those looking for work
- By 2008, work-based support available to those at risk of losing jobs, or on selected benefits

Independent living

- Personal budgets will provide choice to buy own services
- From 2005, investment in schemes like neighbourhood renewal will aim to improve housing opportunities
- From 2005, local authorities will include transport and mobility in needs assessments

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at last be independent?

INDEPENDENCE DAY? The specialists give their views

EARLY YEARS focus on family

The report opens with an acknowledgement of the importance of the early years in ensuring positive life changes for disabled people.

In the past, early years services for young disabled children have been of varied quality. But government policy across health, education and social care now has a strong family focus. Progress in early identification and intervention through the Early Support Programme, for example, ensures that services for young disabled children and their families are finally joined up.

There has been a 62 per cent increase in the population of disabled children between 1975 and 2002, with more children surviving with complex disabilities or identified as having autistic spectrum disorders. A major challenge lies ahead in ensuring these children and their families are fully included in reforms.

The proposed individualised budgets could, and should, ensure flexible family-friendly support.

We have a unique opportunity to transform services for disabled children as part of wider mainstream developments around the early years.

• Philippa Russell, policy adviser on disability, National Children's Bureau

INTO ADULTHOOD growing pains

The report includes useful summaries of the issues facing young people as they become adults and highlights the benefit of focussing on individual needs, continuous service provision and greater clarity on choice and opportunity.

It addresses the problem of the "cliff edge" faced by many disabled teenagers, especially those with learning difficulties, when they could benefit from children's services beyond the cut-off age.

I particularly welcome the extension of child services such as the children's trust and the Family Fund to include disabled people up to the age of 25.

However, I am uncertain about how change will be brought about and from where extra resources will come.

Another area not fully explored is that of training; it must be available to all those involved in turning this report into reality and ensure people have a clear understanding of person-centred planning. There is also little mention of the contribution that voluntary organisations such as Scope can make. In many children's trusts the voluntary sector has been invaluable and should not be ignored.

• Jean Dolphin, executive director of operational services, Scope

EMPLOYMENT the time is right

This is an ambitious programme, which we hope will have a positive impact on the one million disabled people out of work who would like jobs, while valuing employers as important stakeholders in this process.

Its timing is good; there are currently 400 employers who are members of the Employers' Forum on Disability who fund a network that helps them become "barrier-free".

We welcome the government's determination to help retain employees who become disabled and to encourage the NHS to measure its performance on the recruitment and retention of disabled people.

I would add, however, that 2025 must seem a very long time off if you are a disabled person wanting a fair deal in the employment market.

We must hope the plans deliver in a way which cuts that waiting time dramatically.

• Susan Scott-Parker, chief executive, Employers' Forum on Disability (left)

INDEPENDENT LIVING budget benefits

After campaigning for the right to fully participate in society for many years, finally we are being taken seriously.

The report really pushes the notion of personalised services and individualised budgets where a person would be able to bring their Access to Work grant, direct payment budget and technical support budget into one pot.

But the proof is in the pudding and I will be truly impressed when I start to see the report put into practice. It is also important that there is strong synergy with other government policies that tackle social exclusion.

Of course, independent living is not just for disabled people and the report's implementation may have wider benefits for other groups whose right to independent living has also been overlooked.

While I am certain of the government's good intentions, our job is not yet done. We must continue to assist the Department for Work and Pensions to bring about tangible action. Only then will disabled people really feel the benefits of being supported to participate in society as equal citizens.

• Jane Campbell, chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence

'We are concerned at the length of time it will take to implement changes'
– Kate Nash, RADAR

Kate Nash writes: RADAR broadly welcomes the government's report, which it sees as an important milestone on the road to achieving full human rights for disabled people.

We look forward to working with the government in taking the proposals forward, in offering advice and holding politicians to account on delivery.

There is huge potential in this report to increase the opportunities available to disabled people.

RADAR will be working to ensure the government delivers on its promises so that disabled people will begin to feel the benefits in their day-to-day lives as soon as possible.

That said, at times the report is somewhat aspirational and often devoid of clear and unambiguous milestones.

One of the positive things is

that the government has made recommendations concerning each stage of a disabled person's life, but we are disappointed that no direct analysis has been made of the problems facing elderly disabled people.

We are particularly pleased that the report focusses on two areas of specific concern to many of our members, namely independent living and employment.

In particular, we welcome the proposals to streamline support to disabled people in the form of individual budgets.



Kate Nash: will be pushing for funding and swifter action in implementing proposals

However, we are concerned at the length of time it will take to implement these changes and the fact that no government money has yet been ring-fenced to instigate these changes.

We will be pressing the government for swifter action and guaranteed funding for these proposals.

And while welcoming the proposals to improve employment opportunities, we believe the government has set its sights too low and should also be looking at how disabled people already in work can be brought on to become tomorrow's opinion formers and decision makers.

RADAR cautiously welcomes the establishment of the Office for Disabled People, which we hope will be staffed primarily by disabled people themselves.

However, this must not get in the way of ensuring disability is mainstreamed across each and every government department.

• Kate Nash is chief executive of RADAR
• The report can be found at www.strategy.gov.uk/output/page86.asp or tel: 020 7276 1881

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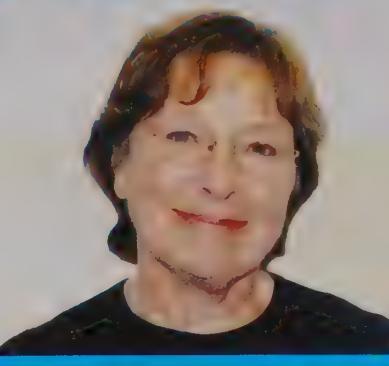
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e-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



ILLUSTRATIONS: CLARE CURTIS

No funding for sexual counselling

I was pleased that the February issue of *DN* focused on sexual relationships and included a survey. Just 20 years ago I joined two others in founding Discern, a counselling service for disabled people specifically in sexuality and sexual relationships.

We developed a fully professional service in Nottinghamshire, with paid counsellors as well as volunteers, and helped many people over the years. Sadly, last year Discern had to close because of funding difficulties,

while the service was still working well and valued by local services for disabled people and Nottinghamshire social services department.

Coincidentally, we heard that SPOD in London, which had been the inspiration for Discern, had also closed for lack of financial support. As I believe we were the only two such specialist services, there is a big hole for those answering your survey saying they would "prefer a specialist psychosexual counselling

service for disabled people".

The problem of funding is not specific to organisations of and for disabled people, but one of short-term funding for voluntary bodies, which leaves them scrabbling constantly for a new funding source, meanwhile losing their paid workers and eventually having to close.

Is there any general move by charities to draw the attention of the government to this ongoing problem?

Tony Latham
Keyworth, Nottingham

Services for older people with cp

I was interested to hear of Carla Wood's experience as an adult with cp (*DN* February).

Ageing is a concern among many adults with cp and this has prompted me to commission a literature review in this area. We know from previous studies how cp can impact on people as they grow older, but we do not have a clear understanding of why this happens.

We hope to publish the result of the review later this year and this will form the basis for action by Scope. We need to push for services for older people with cp, but first, from a social and a medical perspective, we need to know what those services should look like.

Richard Parnell
Head of Research and Public Policy, Scope, London N7

Include us carers

As carers for HL v UK in the Bournewood case (*DN*, November), we were concerned to read in your Mental Capacity Bill coverage (*DN* February) that carers could have too much power.

We agree that the proposals in the Bill fall a long way short of providing the much needed protection for those who lack capacity. But we are acutely aware of the need for carers to be included in the decision making process, not only in the case of HL, which without us would never have seen the light of day, but in so many cases where it has been shown that families and carers have acted in "best interests".

Mr and Mrs E, email

Israelis were disabled too

Your news item, "Middle East conflict has caused 7,000 to become disabled" (*DN* January), quoted from a speech by Ziad Amro, head of the General Union of Disabled Palestinians, and gave statistics about Palestinian casualties.

However, you should be aware that 4,942 Israeli civilians (including women, children and babies) have also been injured and seriously disabled and 727 have been killed during this same conflict, the overwhelming majority of these as a result of suicide bombers.

We would ask you to redress this balance in the interests of fairness.

Sue Baker
Leeds Jewish Representative Council

'Marvellous' radio

Something you missed in Easykit (*DN* January) when covering winter indoor occupations was radio, which is marvellous because you can combine it with jigsaws, knitting, or whatever. Along with that goes CDs.

For his birthday, I got my son a digital radio, a Bush TR2003 from Argos. It's fantastic as you can listen to the World Service at any time and it opens up intelligent broadcasts such as those on BBC 7 and OneWord.

A terrific publication, *Radio Listener's Guide*, published annually, makes one feel like buying every type of radio there is (£5.45 from PO Box 888, Plymouth PL8 1YJ, tel: 01752 872 888). There's a section on "Radio if you have special needs", though all the reviews cover ease of use, button size, etc. **Anne Layram**
South Bank, York

Teen spirit



by Lloyd Miller

I am a deaf teenager currently doing a joint study programme at Ovingdean Hall School (OHS) and City College in Brighton.

I have been at OHS for four years and I moved to the further education department in September last year.

I moved to OHS from Wales because there is no specialist provision for deaf people in my local area. I had been in a unit attached to a mainstream school but I had problems in this school due to bullying and didn't feel that the school was deaf aware and didn't help me sort my problems out.

OHS has helped me develop in many ways, both with my school work and socially, and has helped me build up my confidence, make new friends and take part in activities.

As part of the course at OHS, I take part in regular work experience. One of these jobs was working in the 24 Hour Museum in Brighton. The people there were great and encouraged me to take on the job of editor on their home page for kids, which was great fun. I felt very supported at this work placement, but I don't feel that all young deaf people have the same experience.

I am currently running to be elected onto the national Youth Parliament and I am the only candidate from my area with a disability. The election starts on 7 February, so fingers crossed I will be elected.

If I am, I will be looking to increase disability awareness, especially among other young people.

I think the Youth Parliament is a great idea. It will bring young people together from all over the country, allowing us to have a voice and an opinion as to what we want and need and hopefully we can help others achieve what they want to achieve too.

We still need more teen writers. Remember, it's paid – Editor

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Capacity confusion

Many worried readers have contacted *DN* about the government plans to change incapacity benefit. Lorna Reith casts her expert eye over the new scheme and outlines her own concerns

The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) new Five-Year Strategy contains radical proposals for the future of incapacity benefit (IB).

Over time, the government aims to reduce the number of people on IB by as many as one million. People currently in receipt of IB will go on getting it and more help will be available if they are interested in returning to paid work. Gradually, more and more IB recipients will be required to attend a work-focussed interview.

Some of the people who leave IB to enter employment may find they have to stop work again in the future. Depending on how long since they last got IB, they may find they come under the new regime.

IB will not be available to new claimants. Instead everyone will get a "holding benefit", payable at the same rate as Jobseekers' allowance (about £55 per week), until they go through a medical test. The DWP expect this assessment to happen within 12 weeks. This new test would also include an "employment and support assessment" to look at future work capacity.

The new test would determine which of two new benefits people get. For those



with "the most severe health conditions or impairments" there will be a Disability and Sickness Allowance (DSA), paid at a higher rate than the current long-term rate of IB. This group will be required to attend work-focussed interviews and will be eligible for the various return-to-work programmes, but they won't have to participate.

There is concern over the criteria that will be used to determine the "most severe" conditions. The DWP have said categories currently used to exempt people from the IB medical test will not automatically be adopted as criteria for access to DSA.

For the majority of people, deemed to have "more manageable conditions", there will be a Rehabilitation Support Allowance (RSA). People on RSA will be required

to engage in work-focussed interviews and work-related activity. Those who do so satisfactorily will be rewarded by a higher rate of benefit than the current long-term rate of IB. Those deemed to have refused to engage will face sanctions and will be kept on the holding benefit rate.

Disability Alliance are worried that it will be left to personal advisers to determine whether or not someone has "refused to engage" in work-related activity. People may be sanctioned because staff fail to understand the full impact of their condition – a particular fear for those with mental health problems.

We believe the best judge of whether work-related activity is appropriate or not is the disabled person themselves. This choice will be removed under the new proposals.

The DWP say the packages of additional help and support will be available quite soon, as the Pathways to Work scheme is rolled out. The government anticipates that the IB changes will happen by 2008.

Lorna Reith is chief executive of Disability Alliance.

Candid Kate



So, terrorists can now be put under house arrest without a trial? The government can lock supposed terrorists in their home and deny them the right to see and contact their friends and family?

Recent events have got many human rights campaigners angry. But social service departments up and down the country have been putting the most vulnerable people under house arrest for years.

A while ago I asked for an assessment of support from my social services. They said they could give me support to get out of and into bed and to make sure I was fed and toileted. But there was no word about the career I was aspiring to, nor my social life. All that mattered was how many visits to the loo I made.

Luckily, I can support my own care financially, but there are many out there who can't and who rely on social services to meet their care needs.

I believe every disabled person should have the right to make their own life choices. But I sometimes wonder if we have lost some of our freedom by shutting residential homes.

Independent living is sold by the freedom factor, but are severely disabled people receiving the minimum level of support really free? Or are they, like the terrorists, under a more acceptable kind of house arrest? The social care sector should be rethought, with disabled people on board, before we think about shutting any more homes.

Kate Caryer is a student at the University of East London

The millions whose voices are ignored

Disabled people with the most articulate voices must not drown out the views of others

What most characterises the passing of the last 25 years? The explosion of technology; the dissolving of society's established institutions; the role and position of disabled people in society? We all, I imagine, have our own lists.

Change is the new mantra, and nothing illustrates better the progress and pitfalls than disability issues.

Again, we can all compile our own lists of what has changed most. Is it access to education and employment, the new opportunities afforded by technology or our new, enforceable human rights?

However positive these changes are, they represent the agenda of a narrow spectrum of people who claim to speak for disabled people. They come from articulate, usually spine-injured wheelchair users, as epitomised by the writing and teaching of Michael Oliver. He says that society, in the end, will always need greater rehabilitation than the individual.

My own experience is working with people with learning disabilities. Their behaviour is often difficult to

manage and many have head injuries that make comprehension difficult and communication next to impossible.

As currently defined, people with non-physical impairments make up the majority of people with disabilities. Yet they have no seat at the disability table. Because their voice is expressed through those who care for them, the legitimacy of their position is diluted. As the Victorian institutions fade from memory and people with learning difficulties start to enjoy a better quality of life, their voice remains indistinct and often completely unheard.

Nobody denies that Dame Tanni should sit alongside her sporting peers, Dames Kelly and Ellen, and nobody would argue with the sense and humanity of Professor Oliver's vision of a rehabilitated society. But it must be one that is open and inclusive to all, and not the exclusive domain of those with the clearest, and often the loudest, voices.

Martin Battye is chairman of Kirton healthcare, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

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From small screen to big ideas

Kevin Donnellon became an unlikely star in ITV's *Vote For Me*. He talks to Sarah Hobson about discovering the social model and his growing disillusionment with today's disability movement

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When appearing on the ITV show *Vote For Me* to find an independent candidate for the general election, contestant Kevin Donnellon was told "it was going to be a serious political show". But the Thalidomide survivor was surprised to find it was "more of a tacky game show", and certainly, watching episodes in the living room of Kevin's Liverpool home was as nauseating as seeing an hour of *Celebrity Big Brother*.

43-year-old Kevin beat thousands of applicants to make it onto the show, arguing enthusiastically for the rights of disabled people, among other political issues.

But his passion for disability politics only developed recently. "Until the late 1990s, I tended to avoid disabled people like the plague. I used to say to people, 'I am not disabled, I can do everything for myself'."

Then, in 1996, a friend who was also a Thalidomide survivor invited Kevin to a meeting about the social model of disability. "I said 'get lost' at first, 'if it's full of wheelchairs I don't want to go', but it's one of the best things she ever did for me.

"After the social and medical models of disability were explained, I was like, 'wow, why didn't I get this years ago, it's so obvious'. Before, I would get carried upstairs in clubs by bouncers. I used to be apologetic, thinking I was a nuisance getting carried everywhere. I didn't realise access was a political issue, even though I have always been political – it's strange."

Before discovering the social model, Kevin's political CV boasted membership of left-wing political parties. He was also involved with the anti-nazi league, anti-apartheid movement, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

"I was arrested twice campaigning at an American air base against cruise missiles," he says. "You would touch the fence with a hacksaw and get arrested. I was let off by the police – probably being patronised because I was disabled."

Nowadays, he believes that while rights for disabled people are improving, many people remain just as patronising.

His experiences on *Vote for Me* included a journalist at a press briefing questioning his ability to be a politician because of his disability. "I did feel



CROSBY HERALD

X-factor: Kevin made the final five of the "tacky game show"

WHO IS HE?

Kevin Donnellon was born on 28 November 1961, "the day thalidomide was withdrawn from the market". After a mixed career, including time in a council benefits office and political campaigning of all kinds, he returned to university to study political theory, including disability studies. After a masters in disability studies in Leeds, he became a part-time lecturer at Edge Hill College in Liverpool.

talks on disability, including at his local secondary school, which would not accept him as a teenager because he was disabled. "Ironically, they asked me to do some school assemblies about disability and inclusion."

He has also just addressed doctors from the Prosthetics Society. "I didn't hold back any punches; I really slagged off the prosthetics that I was made to wear years ago – but I went down well." Kevin's childhood legs still stand on the windowsill in his toilet, which he thinks is the best place for them.

Meanwhile, the British Council of Disabled People has lost its way, he believes. "It's sad the way we have all become so fragmented – with people trying to build their own little empires. There's a lot of mistrust."

With new discrimination legislation and the Disability Rights Commission, he says if disabled people believe in inclusion, "it should be about partnership with non-disabled people. It's not like them and us – anyone can become disabled".

He is now more likely to be influencing minds by giving

What now for Kevin?

It is too late, he suggests, to go back to his days of militant campaigning for the Direct Action Network for Disabled People, which saw him throw red paint over Downing Street's gates in protest at benefit cuts.

Kevin plans to rejoin the Liberal Democrats, which he had to leave to be on the show, so he may have a chance of being a politician in future elections. "I've done the campaigning outside, now I want to be on the inside."

And after his first foray into the media world, he would like to do more. "My ideal job is as a columnist. I'd like to have a platform on which I can be totally opinionated – maybe even on a current affairs radio phone-in show; you could not lose an argument because you could just cut them off."

DN photographer Graham Boul, one of the judges for this year's Freedom in Focus competition, offers his top tips

Open the lens and get focussed

Ten tips for amateur photographers:

1. Preparation

Read the instruction books again and make sure you are familiar with all of your camera's functions.

Check that everything is working properly and, if going on a trip, put a roll of film through the camera and have it processed to be certain.

Check that you have enough film or flash cards and batteries for each piece of equipment.

2. Accessories

Keep these to a minimum and travel light; there's nothing worse than an overweight bag spoiling your trip. Great photos are often taken with the minimum equipment and fuss.

For SLR users, prime lenses in the 28-200mm range or an equivalent zoom lens will offer you greater flexibility.

3. Subject matter

Remember that variety is the spice of life. Shoot a good cross-section for plenty of memorable moments and photos that you will want to keep or frame or even SELL!

Think in terms of Still life, People, Sports and Action, Holidays and Travel, Wildlife, Architecture and Nature and you should have a good selection.

4. Exposure

This is usually automatic with today's compact cameras and can be trusted. However, if you are using a light meter, check and double-check the settings to avoid disappointment.

Check and double-check that the camera settings match the light meter.

When photographing people, use the bounce-flash setting if available.

5. Composition

Read up on the "golden mean" or the "thirds rule" for composing your photographs.

Be considerate to your subject. If it is a stranger ask permission to take their photograph or include them as a significant part of a scene.

Don't be afraid to use your imagination! With modern cameras, what you see is what you get – is the view the result that you want? Try different viewpoints for the same subject and see which is best for you.

6. Travelling

When travelling by public transport, land, air or sea,



Local Bobby by Brian Thomas, one of this year's entries

always carry your equipment with you.

Make sure you are well insured – replacements can be expensive.

Don't leave your bag where it can be stolen.

Have your film baggage searched by hand. There is evidence proving that the accumulated radiation from x-rays causes damage.

7. Opportunities

Always be ready for the unexpected.

Make sure your camera is loaded, accessible and ready to shoot at a moment's notice.

8. Holding techniques

Hold your camera firmly with both hands.

Rest at least one arm against

your body or suitable support.

Sit if you are not steady enough while standing.

Keep the camera level.

Squeeze the shutter, don't jerk it.

9. Special effects

There are numerous "gadgets" on the market as well as those made by the camera manufacturers to suit particular cameras which you can use, some of which are very expensive. These include straightforward colour filters, distortion in various ways, star filters, etc.

However, my advice is to master the use of your camera first and "mess around" later.

You can experiment with your own, free, home-made "gadgets" from coloured sweet

papers to coloured glass – it's up to you.

10. Training and education

It is likely that your local college will run photography classes either daytime or evening that you could enrol in. These have the advantage of being structured so you work towards examinations. This allows you to achieve qualifications, which you may go on to use or improve upon. If you have a strong interest in photography, I recommend you consider these opportunities whatever camera equipment you have at present.

Alternatively, there is a myriad of privately run courses available for a price, which are more usually advertised in the photographic press and are often very exciting as well.

Whilst this isn't an exhaustive list and some or all of it may be familiar to a number of you, I nevertheless wish you good shooting and look forward to seeing your entries in this year's Freedom In Focus 2005 competition!

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Runner-up – £200 cash

Under 18 winner – Digital camera, plus four free ticket rides on the London Eye (donated by London Eye) with a professional photographer.

Runner-up – Digital camera.

The theme of this year's competition is 'Community' which might focus on people around you, relationships, village/urban life, local traditions, family activities, neighbours, animals, as well as communities seen in other countries.

The closing date is 31 May 2005.

If you would like an entry form please contact Fiona Mitchell at fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk or call DN on 020 7619 7323.

www.disabilitynow.org.uk/comps/freedominfocus2005

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On the road to recovery

Helen Smith on what to consider when choosing a road recovery policy



If you lease your car through Motability you'll never have to choose which roadside recovery service to use as Motability have a contract with RAC. But if you own your own car, is RAC still your best bet or are there better deals to be found elsewhere?

When looking for a recovery company, start by considering the kind of service you need. If you're just looking to be rescued from the roadside and towed to the nearest garage, there are several good deals. The cheapest I found is from Autonational Rescue who, for just £28.50 a year, will tow you to a garage. You must have broken down at least a mile from home, though.

If you want the added security of home breakdown cover, and you want to be towed home or to your destination ("recovery to destination") if you break down, you will have to pay more. The AA option 300,

Policy	Price	Arrival time (mins)	Home breakdown	Emergency recovery	Recovery to destination	Distance from home where pickup starts – if no home start	Number of members
AA							
Option 100	£53	35	✗	✓	✗	1/4 mile from home	15 million
Autonational Rescue							
Roadside Superservice	£28.50	36-41	✗	✓	✗	1 mile from home	100,000
Britannia Rescue							
Rescue	£53	37	✗	✓	✗	1/2 mile from home	330,000
Green Flag							
Rescue	£33.50*	40	✗	✓	✗	1 mile from home	5 million
RAC Response							
Recovery Plus	£61.22*	40	✓	✓	✓		6.5 million
RAC Response	£83	43	✓	✓	✓		

* Price calculated on 40-year-old man driving 2001 Vauxhall Vectra, living in West Midlands and driving 15,000 miles a year

which includes all these services, costs £143.

Of all the companies I spoke to, only RAC offer a service exclusively for blue badge holders. It's called RAC Response, costs £83 and provides roadside assistance, recovery and an at-home service. RAC will also try to provide a free hire car with automatic transmission when it's required. If, like myself, you

find it virtually impossible to get out of the car safely to make a call from a roadside phone, RAC can locate you using mobile phone data. Motorists with hearing impairments can contact RAC for assistance using mobile phone text message. All the other companies said drivers with a disability would be given priority when being rescued, but they offered no special deals.

Green Flag – the third largest recovery company in the UK – said they treat all customers as individuals, whether they have a caravan, pet or a disability and

this is why they offer no set price. Autonational Rescue, who have 100,000 members, said they were too small to have a special package for disabled drivers. They also don't cover vans.

In 2004, RAC were ranked as the top roadside rescue and recovery company in the annual J D Power and Associates independent customer satisfaction 2004 UK Roadside Assistance study. They are not the cheapest, but their deal to disabled motorists is hard to better.



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Euro stars

Looking for a city break over Easter? Four *DN* readers profile their favourites.

Paris

As a landscape painter, Michael Solomons appreciated the sights and streets of Paris

For an artist, a trip to Paris is the ultimate inspiration – a city that is famous for its influence on the arts.

My girlfriend, Edna, and I are landscape painters and dreamed of visiting Paris together. We both have cerebral palsy, use wheelchairs and need assistance during our holidays. We decided to contact Jaime Duran, the director of Ability 2 Travel, as they have provided travel companions for us before.

We travelled by Eurostar. It is fully equipped to take wheelchairs, with easy access by ramp to board the train, wheelchair spaces in the carriages and accessible toilets. On arrival at Gare du Nord, Paris, the driver from the French Association for Transport of Disabled People (ATPAP) was waiting to take us to our hotel.

We stayed at the Residence International de Paris, which offers good facilities for



JAMIE TROUNCE



which commands an excellent view of the city. Jaime Duran recommended that we took manual

disabled people. Our room included a wheel-in shower. But being on the outskirts of Paris meant we needed an accessible taxi to get to the city centre. There were only two accessible/adapted taxis in Paris last year, but apparently there will be more in 2005.

Our first full day in Paris included a trip to the Eiffel Tower and we even managed to get to the second level

wheelchairs for this trip, which was good advice, especially for the Seine River boat (Bateau Mouche).

For another incredible view of Paris we visited the city's highest point, Sacre Coeur in Montmartre. We also had a portrait painted by an artist in the Place du Tertre. The Rue des Abbesses was buzzing with shops, cafes and restaurants.

We found the New Pyramid entrance to the Louvre Museum very accessible and modern. The museum is vast and has some 18km of corridors. We visited the Italian area (Denon section) which includes the *Mona Lisa*.

Our holiday suffered a downturn on the Saturday

afternoon when Edna's wheelchair punctured. The best advice is, take a repair kit with you, as finding the nearest repairer – a Decathlon shop which repairs bicycles – was extremely hard to track down.

On our final day we visited the Musée d'Orsay which has a large collection of Impressionist paintings by Renoir, Monet, Van Gogh and Pissarro, to name a few.

All in all we had a fantastic time and enjoyed our experience of the Parisian lifestyle. We hope to go back next year.

Ability 2 Travel can provide male and female travel companions. Tel: 01536 501 298, email: info@ability2travel.com www.ability2travel.com

CORNWALL

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Munich

In their trip round Europe, Australians Alexandra Thompson and her friend Grant Kelly, a wheelchair user, really rated Munich

We found our niche in Munich, Bavaria's centre of free-flowing beer and sausages, oompah bands with lederhosen and big brass instruments, stein (mug) swinging and jubilant cries of "prost".

Munich is Germany's third largest city and great for access. Although founded in the 12th Century, extensive allied bombing destroyed much of it in World War II, so many buildings are fairly new.

There's a wide choice of accessible restaurants and bars, along with most museums and galleries. The city's trams and some buses are wheelchair accessible, and the train system has portable ramps which staff will use to help you on and off trains (with notice).

Bavaria is filled to the brim with Germans who appreciate a good time and know how to have a good laugh. While there are plenty of nice things to see in Munich, its inhabitants are what make the city special.

Here are five of our top recommendations.

Visit the Hofbräuhaus, one of Munich's biggest and oldest beer halls. It is highly wheelchair accessible, has a



beer garden as well as a cavernous indoor hall with huge wooden tables, and speedy service. Beer wenches in traditional Bavarian costume cart frothy steins and sell huge salted pretzels. Food is available – mostly traditional German fare with wurst featuring heavily – at reasonable prices. A big brass band pumps out German songs, and raucous singing is positively encouraged.

Check out the traditional German glockenspiel at the

Neues Rathaus (new town hall) in the centre of Munich.

Get the lowdown on beer brewing, view traditional Bavarian costumes and brush up on your German history at the Stadtmuseum (fully accessible, discounted entry £1).

See Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and some 19th Century European art at the Neue Pinakothek (accessible, discounted entry £2.50, including audio guide).

Enjoy a picnic in the Englischer Garten, outside the city centre, but easily accessible by tram.

For an exciting side trip, visit Freiburg and catch a cable car up 1,286m to Schauinsland, the Black Forest Highlands (£7.50 return). The view is magnificent and the ride fully wheelchair accessible. It's a great way to see the Black Forest without trekking. Don't forget to sample a piece of the famous Black Forest gateau.

Direct flights from London Heathrow to Munich, £95 to £130, depending on season. 4U Munchen is a central, wheelchair accessible hostel, £11 for a bunk in a four-bed room dorm, with breakfast for stays two nights or longer. www.hostelworld.com

The Hotel Deutsches is a four star hotel near the train station, which we saw advertising wheelchair friendly rooms. For a brochure, Munich for Handicapped Tourists, see www.muenchen-tourist.de or email tourismus@muenchen

Brussels



Catherine Johnson recommends Easter in a chocolate city

Brussels may not be the first place you'd consider when planning a city break over Easter, but give Belgium's chocolate capital a chance. From the Grand Place to the EU, Brussels mixes old and new to provide one of the most eclectic city experiences in Europe.

Highlights include:

- **Grand Place** – the centrepiece of Brussels' historical sights. After being bombed by the French in 1695, the cobbled square and its buildings were rebuilt by Flemish guildsmen in Renaissance style. Today this magnificent area houses some of the best architectural sights in Brussels.
- **Manneken Pis** – believe it or not, a small statue of a boy urinating is one of the city's top tourist draws. The statue was created in the early 1600s as a statement about the quality of the area's drinking water. It will probably be dressed in a new costume for Easter.
- **Museum Corridor** – the Musée Instrumental houses a fine collection of historical musical instruments in its Art

Nouveau building and there's a great view from the restaurant at the top. Across the street, the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts features traditional Flemish pieces as well as more modern surrealist art. It also has accessible toilets.

• **Eating** – Brussels is known for its food. From chocolate shops dotted around the city to waffle kiosks to restaurants specialising in frites, mussels and flavoured beers, there is something for everyone. Many restaurants and bars have at least one step at the entrance.

Access to all forms of public transport frequently means negotiating steps, but most sights are concentrated in the compact city centre. Many taxis can accommodate folding wheelchairs – but not electric ones. A large hill separates the lower and upper towns, while cobblestones are common in some parts of the old city. There is barrier-free shopping near Rue Neuve. Catherine Johnson is director of Amhartan Travel Services, which is launching an access guide website in April. In the meantime, for more information on Brussels, London or Paris email info@amhartan.com

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Barcelona

Gaudi's cathedral, street markets, promenading on the Rambla – Sue Ferreira couldn't resist Barcelona



In 1992 the Olympic Games were held in Barcelona and they changed the city for ever. Beaches were rebuilt or created from virtual wasteland and an entire new neighbourhood was developed. Consideration for disabled people is now so good that we completely forgot our usual precaution of looking for slopes down before we went up!

Our hotel, the Rivoli Ramblas, was right on the Rambla, the main promenade to see and be seen on. Strolling along at any time of day was fun. There were human statues, jugglers and

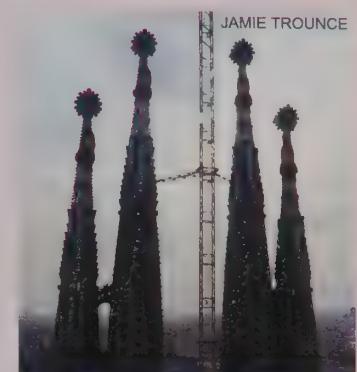
magicians; glorious flower stalls; less glorious pets in cages; artists of all sorts and colourful fruit and vegetables. Pavement cafes were easily accessible.

Barcelona is lovely. It has a huge container port and a thriving marina where you can watch the rich and famous as they sit on board their luxury yachts. The harbour has accessible cafes all around.

We went to one particularly good restaurant called Les Quize Nitz, in Placa Reial, a small square just off the Rambla. Although it doesn't open until 8.30pm people begin to queue at about quarter to eight. With entertainers all along the line, time passed quickly and it was well worth the wait. They put us on the ground floor next to the disabled toilets.

Gaudi is in evidence everywhere. His cathedral, Sagrada Familia, is not to be missed. There has been much discussion about continuing to build it or not ever since his unfortunate death under a tram in 1926. It will make a fitting memorial to him.

The ground floor was accessible; the tower was not. My husband went up whilst I sat in the sunshine and waited for him to put his head out and wave to me. Sitting at the



bottom in the sunshine with my ice cream was not all bad!

Parts of the underground are accessible with lifts at pavement level. Everywhere is clearly signed. We have a lot to learn in this country.

A pretty beach to visit is Sitges, which also has a lovely parish church. The town has long been a centre for artists and is also popular today with gay travellers.

Shopping opportunities are everywhere in Barcelona. There are more than 200 shops in Les Glories, which should be enough for anyone, and street markets sell anything from wines, coffee, cheese and cakes to pictures and antiques.

I would heartily recommend Barcelona to anyone with a mobility impairment.

A very good guidebook published by the AA gives details about all the disabled facilities in every attraction, from toilets to restaurants, transport and sights.

GREECE - CRETE

Accessible holidays for physically challenged people

ERIA RESORT is a new welcoming, four-star hotel especially designed with disabled people in mind. The resort is situated in the historic village of Maleme in Crete, Greece, in a quiet area of exceptional natural beauty right amidst olive groves overlooking the Cretan sea.



The resort features eleven rooms and two suites fully adapted with an electrically adjustable bed and bathrooms with a wheel-in shower, shower chair, horizontal and vertical bars and adjustable raised toilet seat.

The hotel is committed to meeting all accessibility needs of guests with disabilities. There is a range of amenities available such as wheelchairs, hoists, oxygen compressors, stanchions, scooters, rollators. Furthermore, specialist doctors and physiotherapists are available upon request.



The hotel's reception is at your disposal round the clock, while there is also a cozy lounge, a restaurant, a pool bar and lift.

When it's time to relax and entertain, you will find plenty to do as: fully-equipped gym featuring a separate physiotherapy room, a Jacuzzi, a swimming pool with a ramp for easier descent/ascent and hydro massage. Other facilities provided include: boccia field, volleyball/basketball courses, ping-pong and a specially designed area for other kinds of sports.

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My dream to get away

Alison Irwin wrote to *DN* frustrated by the seemingly endless number of obstacles that stood in the way of a trip of a lifetime. After speaking to other disabled people about the trips they had made, Lucy Howard offers some ideas for the independent traveller worried about everything from insurance to accessible buses

I am a severely disabled wheelchair user with Friedrich's Ataxia. I'd like to have the opportunity to simply apply for a visa, book a flight and go travelling for a while to Australia or Singapore, or maybe both.

I've worked out that if I was non-disabled, it would be so much easier financially to follow this dream: I'd get a small bank loan, book my flights and hotel, and take enough money for food and drink.

But being disabled turns the whole affair from a possible dream into an unrealistic fantasy. I'd need to pay extra for a helper to assist me with drinks and meals on the plane, specialist accommodation, a personal assistant to help me with daily tasks such as getting to and from bed, dressing, toileting, showering, preparing meals and pushing me and my wheelchair to whatever sightseeing place I choose to go. I'd also need to pay for accessible transport and insurance.

I am currently receiving 24-7 personal assisted cover, funded by direct payments. However, if possible, I would prefer not to take my usual carers with me, but instead to receive a care package at my chosen destination. I think doing it that way will somehow also give me a greater feeling of independence.

I wouldn't want to go away as part of a group as I'd prefer to make my own choices over where, when and how to do things and go to places, etc.

Can you help me to fulfil my dream? Thanks, Alison

Many specialist travel agents will help to tailor make a trip for you and will advise on what assistance is available in your chosen destination. There are also many companies and organisations offering advice, information and holidays, including individual trips, group holidays, and packages to Australia and many other locations, covering flights, accommodation, transport and care.

Make sure airlines are aware of your specific access needs. For travel to and from British airports, contact Access and Mobility, Transport for London (tel/minicom: 020 7941 4600, or access&mobility@tfl.gov.uk). British Airways has travel clinics around the UK offering specialist medical advice (tel: 01276 685040, www.british-airways.com/travelclinics). Many airlines have equipment such as hoists to help people

transfer to and from the plane and most Australian airports have skychairs. Once on the plane, you can request seats with more leg room that are nearer the toilets, such as bulkhead seats. If you are able to fly Business Class, it's worth it for the extra space.

For travel assistance, there are a number of options, including Ability 2 Travel, which provides PAs who accompany you on your holiday. Australia has a good reputation catering for disabled travellers, with a number of organisations offering help with carers, including Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (www.spinalcordinjuries.com.au). That said, despite your reservations, it may be wise to take someone from home that you know and trust and who knows your needs.

Many companies offer insurance packages for disabled people, covering individual

requirements. Prices vary widely, so it's worth researching the options. Travelcare operates MedScan, which offers advice on medical conditions and the cover you will need (www.travelcare.co.uk) while

Tripscope has a database of insurance companies. Philip Barron (see *DN* February), recommends Free Spirit (tel: 0845 230 5000) and CH

'With a bit of research and planning, there's no reason not to get on that plane'

Travelcare (0870 750 6711). There is also En Route, which specialises in specific pre-existing conditions (0800 783 7245). J&M Insurance have relaunched Travelbility, a specialist insurance cover for disabled people and those with pre-existing medical conditions. It has additional medical, repatriation and baggage benefits, including equipment cover (tel: 01902 566919).

There are several sources of

LUCY HOWARD



Ayer's Rock: One of many highlights of a trip to Oz

holiday funding. RADAR provides details of charities, trusts and funds that may help you, including the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Care and Respite Fund (www.qefd.org/carerespite).

It is worth planning your route so that you can avoid later pitfalls and get to see everything. Singapore is often a stopover city on flights to Australia, and breaking the flight means more comfort and lets you spend a few days exploring the city *en route* to your destination. Reader Elaine Boyd, who has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user, says of Singapore: "Besides only staying there a few days, we did the city tour and saw some great sights". There are some ramped pavements and accessible toilets. Newer attractions such as SunTec City are fully accessible.

In Australia, Elaine found Sydney's Circular Quay and Darling Harbour no problem to navigate. She also did a city tour, went on a cruise and took a ferry to Manly beach. She then explored around Sydney in

a camper van.

Transport in Australia is generally good. Many buses in Sydney (and many other cities) are wheelchair accessible, (see www.sydneybuses.nsw.gov.au). SeeMore Scenic Tours offer a wheelchair accessible vehicle rental service (www.geocities.com/seemoretours/vehiclerent). In many coastal areas, there are beach wheelchairs available, giving you access to the beach and coastline.

So, with a bit of research and planning, there's no reason not to get on that plane. Elaine says her trip was "truly amazing, a dream".

• We hope to feature more from Elaine Boyd's holiday in a future issue of *DN*.

USEFUL CONTACTS

• Ataxia UK has a newsletter, *The Ataxian*, and a holiday factsheet. They recommend www.wickedworldtour.com, created by two young people with Friedrich's Ataxia.

Tel: 0845 644 0606, www.ataxia.org.uk

• Accessible Travel and Leisure. Tel: 01452 729739, www.accessibledownunder.co.uk

• Can Be Done. Tel: 0208 907 2400, www.canbedone.co.uk

• Global Star Travel. Tel: 0870 740 9100.

• Ability 2 Travel. Tel: 01536 501928, www.ability2travel.com

• Tripscope. Tel: 0845 758 5641, www.tripscope.org.uk

• Mobility Abroad. www.mobilityabroad.com.

• RADAR. Tel: 020 7250 3222, www.radar.org.uk

• Access Singapore guide: <http://dpa.org.sg/DPA/access/contents.htm>

• See www.e-ability.com for information and resources on accessibility in Australia

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 Terry Mason writes:

Malthouse Farm Holiday Cottages in Gissing, Norfolk, are four separate cottages sleeping between four and eight people. All have log fires and under-floor heating and three of them were designed for wheelchair users.

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The cottages are set in a very picturesque area; keep your eyes open for deer and other wildlife. Local Southwold has an accessible seafront and much of the nearby area is flat.

All in all we found our cottage a really wonderful, restful place to unwind and recuperate.

• Tel: 01379 677512, fax: 01379 677510, or www.norfolkcottages.net

 Wales Tourist Board (WTB) disability access adviser, Colin Antwis writes:

Here in Wales, in line with their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, operators of hotels, guest houses, caravan parks, hostels and campsites are taking a good look at themselves and discovering ways to remove barriers and improve accessibility in every way, not just physical.

Having taken stock of their facilities, they set down the facts in an access statement. This enables visitors to choose a location that is suited to their lifestyle. For example, in Pembrokeshire, self-catering owners are discovering the value in telling visitors about cordless kettles, lever door handles, non-slip floor finishes and level threshold showers. Small hotels promote the benefits of having portable hearing loops and vibrating fire alarm pagers.

WTB brochures will not be carrying



the three national accessible scheme symbols, which were unclear. Instead, look for a circled capital S, which means that the facility has an access statement. You can find access statements on the WTB website. Eventually, we hope to have a search facility so you can key in your requirements to find locations.

When you are planning a holiday destination in Wales, do ask for an access statement to be sent to you in your preferred format. 1,500 places now have them. By asking for a statement, you will help us to build up this new scheme.

• www.visitwales.co.uk

Some more home truths

More *DN* readers offer a thumbs up or down for a selection of holiday attractions and initiatives around the country



Bo Crombet-Beolens and Margaret Read, write: Access is the last thing to be considered by most bird reserve managers. At many reserves, paths are too steep, too narrow or too sticky for wheelchair users. Car parks are located miles from hides, while trails rarely have seats to rest on. Signs are too small to read and hides are normally only accessible by way of flights of steps. It is frustrating because not only would access changes be relatively easy to implement – they would also benefit everyone, including older people and children.

But things are changing. We recently established the Disabled Birders' Association (DBA). Our aim is to improve access for disabled people to nature and bird reserves. There are many reserves that could be improved with the right help and advice at not too great a cost.

The DBA website has access details for a



number of reserves in the UK and abroad, as well as information on how to get more involved with the club. All disabled birdwatchers can help by spreading the word about accessible reserves.

We also send out regular newsletters informing members of access developments and the trips we run.

• www.disabledbirdersassociation.org.uk



DN reader Janet Goodall writes: We have had some lovely holidays in South Devon as it is nice and flat in most places for wheelchairs. Last autumn we thought we would try places we had not been to before. We found The World of Country Life at Sandy Bay, Exmouth. It claims to be "One of the best days out in Devon".

If you are in a wheelchair, do not go. It says it is wheelchair friendly, and when I phoned to check, they said it was. I asked again when we paid to go in. "Oh, yes," said the lady. We paid about £12 – for myself in a chair and my husband. My son, his partner and three small children paid £26.

We went round the vintage cars and saw donkeys, rabbits and some goats. In the distance we could also see a big stag. We asked how we get to see the other animals and were told we had to go on a train ride, for an extra £1 each. But no way could wheelchair users go – the train was completely inaccessible.

So our day was spoilt. We should all have had a reduced rate to go in as we only saw a quarter of the place.

All that and the accessible toilet is up a steep hill.



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INSURANCE UPDATE

Since our article on travel insurance last month, we have received more information.

Chartwell Insurance can provide two weeks cover in Europe for persons aged up to 64 for £17.80 (11-17 days). There is a ten-day option for £14.55. An annual policy for Europe (up to age 64, excluding winter sports) is available for £43.50.

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• Tel: 020 8958 0900 or www.chartwellinsurance.co.uk

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Theatre

Grubs, Slugs and Boogie Bugs



Being surrounded by hordes of excitable two to five-year-olds at the theatre is a novel experience. Fortunately Half Moon Theatre's production of *Grubs, Slugs and Boogie Bugs* provides a focus for their wayward attention.

The adventures of our hero, Bud, as he searches for the perfect gift for his mum, leads to a journey of discovery and unlikely meetings. As the frost thaws, so the magical garden, in which the play is set, comes alive, with a variety of creatures raising their colourful heads and offering advice.

Performed with high energy and panache, the actors bring the script to life, exploring themes of friendship, acceptance and loneliness.

Jamie Beddard

- *Grubs, Slugs and Boogie Bugs* is on tour around the UK to 8 May. An accompanying storybook is available. For venues and dates, tel: 020 7709 8900, www.halfmoon.org.uk.

The multi-purpose set offers a spectacular backdrop, and a highly original soundtrack accompanies the piece. British Sign Language is cleverly woven into the action, introducing both hearing and hearing impaired children to the exciting physical and theatrical language.

Sporadic lapses of concentration are combatted by entertaining movement and slapstick routines.

There is plenty of theatre for young people around, especially in London, but I would suggest that all those with distractable young ones see *Grubs, Slugs and Boogie Bugs* and sample its colourful delights.

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What's on



Film

Sixth Happiness is being released on DVD by the British Film Institute (BFI) on 28 March. The film, based on Firdaus Kanga's autobiography, *Trying to Grow*, examines the difficulties of being a young, gay Indian man with brittle bone disease. Kanga stars in the film, along with Nina Wadia, of *Goodness Gracious Me* fame, and Meera Syal.

- BFI: tel: 0207 957 8957, www.bfi.org.uk



Mountain view: Nepali children, from Stuart Baker Brown's lens

Starlight Express will be at the New Theatre in Oxford from 9-26 March. There will be an audio described performance on 10 March.

- From £10. Tel: 0870 606 3500, www.getlive.co.uk

Exhibitions

Stuart Baker Brown is exhibiting photographs and diary entries at a show titled *View of a Schizophrenic* at Faith House, Holton Lee, Poole, from 25 February to 5 April. In the show, Brown documents his experiences with mental health problems and records his travels to Nepal.

- Free. Open daily. Tel: 01202 625562, www.holtonlee.co.uk

Blind Art: Sense and Sensuality will be at the Royal College of Art from 2-7 March. All 60 exhibits were drawn from entries to the charity BlindArt's first annual competition.

About a third of the entries, which include paintings, sculpture and installations, are by visually impaired artists. All exhibits can be touched, and there are descriptions in audio and Braille.

- Free. There will also be events and talks in conjunction with the exhibition. Tel: 020 7245 9977, www.blindart.net

Comedy

Laurence Clark has returned to the tour circuit with *The Jim Davidson Guide to Equality*, where he draws comparisons between Jim Davidson and Tony Blair. Some performances are sign language interpreted.

- To 4 June. For tour venues and dates around the UK, see www.laurenceclark.co.uk

Lucy Howard

More what's on at
www.disabilitynow.org.uk

sold a diamond ring worth £8,900 for a shocking £1,450 to Gary, a young man with Down's syndrome. Happily, a full refund was extracted live on air. In another case, a wheelchair user was "recruited" by a dodgy claims management company for a scam exploiting the Disability Discrimination Act. Damages were claimed for "injury to feelings" from small businesses who failed to provide ramp access to their premises, tactics deplored by Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission.

Did you know that Einstein probably had a learning difficulty? C4's *The Riddle of Einstein's Brain* suggested the genius behind the theory of relativity may have been autistic.

BBC2's *Deaf Holocaust: Deaf People and Nazi Germany* illustrated how thousands of deaf and disabled people were sterilized and murdered in Nazi Germany as "useless eaters" who made no contribution to society under the T4 killing programme, the precursor to the concentration camps.

BBC1's *Watchdog* continues to tackle rogue traders, recently featuring an unscrupulous jeweller who

Appearance shouldn't be everything, but in our society it often is. This was confirmed in BBC1's *New Face, New Life*, which followed the progress of Julian and Hayley, both born with congenital facial disfigurements. Hayley has undergone 70 operations and says most people "judge a book by its cover". Her weeping father said all this surgery was to make her "acceptable" rather than for any functional purpose.

Jane Shepherd

The Day has come

Liz Choppin meets rising star Steve Day, the UK's only deaf comedian (he hasn't heard of any others), as he begins his UK tour

You can tell a lot about a person by their home. In Steve Day's, birds squawk in the background, the telly blasts children's songs and electronic gizmos buzz constantly. It's wild.

Day, who describes his hometown of Stevenage in Hertfordshire as "a right dump", came to London seven years ago as a computer programmer and hated it. A year later he began stand-up as the sole deaf comedian on the circuit. He's never looked back.

"My first gig was like a light bulb going on in my head. For once, I didn't have to worry about what someone was saying back to me. It's the most relaxing thing I've ever done."

Now, gigging six or seven nights a week, he has become hot property: he has back-to-back bookings for the next year, is the subject of a Channel Four film and has been featured by Peter White on Radio 4's *No*

Triumph, No Tragedy.

Day makes it clear he doesn't have a problem making fun of himself and his disability (his website strapline is "the UK's only deaf comedian – if there are any others, he hasn't heard"). "I'm not politically correct. Changing words doesn't make it [my deafness] go away," he says. "Some deaf groups tell me I'm a lightweight

'The worst disability would be losing my sense of humour – there is no special society for that'

because I'm only seventy per cent deaf – I'm not disabled enough. So now I add five per cent for a bit of glamour."

For Day, humour has helped him harness his disability and use it in a positive way.

"I don't mind using it to my advantage or for my show," he says. "I'm just being me, and that is part of me. It's part of

communication."

"I know I run the risk of being a token, but I don't mind. What I hate are sympathy laughs. But I've got so much better after six years of doing this I know I deserve to be up there."

"I always say that the worst disability would be losing my sense of humour – there is no special society for that."

Steve has always used jokes as a defence, as a way of "getting to people before they get to me, of keeping them at a distance." He has incorporated this into his stand-up routine and says he has no qualms about humiliating audience members. "If you're sitting in the crowd, and you have an ugly jumper on, I'm gonna have a go at you."

Steve had trouble getting gigs at first because to get a venue, he'd have to call on the phone to follow up for shows, which was a problem. "Asking a deaf person to ring up is like



Day: Once a PC programmer, now a non-PC comedian

asking someone with cerebral palsy to walk one hundred yards to get a gig.

"Now I have a manager to do all that. He's a hustler. I like someone else to be a bastard on my behalf," he says, breaking into peels of laughter.

Best of all, Steve's new-found fame has bought him luck with the ladies. "Before all this, I was crap with girls," he reflects. "I had no confidence." Pulling

out a picture of his wife, he points out he would never have had the guts "to approach" her before doing stand-up.

His success has also helped him discover where he belongs. "I didn't want to be in the deaf community, but I'm not fully in the hearing community, either." Now, it seems, he has found his niche.

• For tour dates and more see: www.isitmyround.com

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Tips for courting success



A good lawyer can help you with housing disputes, criminal negligence and discrimination cases. But how do you go about finding one with the right skills?

And where can you find financial support? Solicitor Anne Luttman-Johnson offers a jargon-free guide to the law and disability

To many people, a solicitor still means a middle-aged man buried away in a back office behind piles of paper. While there are still members of the profession operating in these circumstances, the legal world is changing, and many offices are now open-plan and staffed by women. But have they become accessible for disabled people?

There are many situations in which you may come into contact with the law. You may need assistance to buy or sell your house, write a will, deal with the administration of a parent or grandparent's estate, or resolve a matrimonial issue. You may need advice on a housing issue, such as a tenancy, or you may have problems with employment. You may want to bring a claim under the Disability Discrimination Act or pursue a personal injury or clinical negligence claim. Or you may

need to attend court as a witness, litigant or member of the jury.

What are the various ways the legal profession, and the courts, are making themselves more accessible to disabled people?

General legal advice

If you need to consult a solicitor about an issue such as buying or selling a house, making a will or administering a parent's estate, then you will probably visit your local high street firm of solicitors. The Law Society has produced a guide on the Disability Discrimination Act, which is available to all solicitors, informing them of their duties under the Act. For example, if the solicitor's office is inaccessible to a disabled person then the solicitor should make alternative arrangements to see the client in an accessible venue. Solicitors also need to make information available in



www.adphotographic.co.uk

Times have changed: While disabled people have found it hard to access legal services in the past, many are now accessible

the most accessible format for their client, such as by email, in large print or on tape.

More information on this is available on the Law Society's website, www.lawsociety.gov.uk. The site also gives details about solicitors firms that specialise in specific areas of practice and whether a firm has disabled access. It is important to look first at the areas of law the firm specialises in and choose one on that basis rather than what their access and facilities are like.

Specialist legal advice

Certain areas of the law require very specialist advice. If you have had an accident that has left you with a serious disability and you want to bring a personal injury claim, or a claim for clinical negligence, then it is essential you seek advice from a solicitor who specialises in this field. A good starting point would be one of the organisations or charities that support people with your condition, such as Headway, the Spinal Injuries Association, or the Limbless Association. They have lists of approved solicitors that they pass on to people who have sustained these injuries. But this is only a starting point. It is essential to make further enquiries of the solicitors themselves, asking questions such as how many cases they have dealt with in the last year involving your injuries.

All the solicitors that specialise in this area of law will give an initial interview for

free, and they should be prepared to visit you either at home or in hospital. As well as finding a specialist solicitor, it is also important to feel comfortable with that person, as they will need to know details about every aspect of your life.

Paying for legal advice

If you visit a solicitor for general legal advice, you will have to pay unless you are eligible for public funding. This will depend on your income, and you may have to make a contribution. Public funding is still available for criminal matters and for some civil matters such as clinical negligence, housing, debts, education, employment, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, mental health and community care. The Legal Services Commission funds specialist firms to provide this advice. Their helpful website at www.legalservices.gov.uk includes a form so you can calculate your eligibility. Or you can call 0800 085 6643 for information on eligibility.

For further information about the type of work covered under the public funding scheme and for details of your nearest specialist firm go to www.clsdirect.org.uk or call 0845 345 4345.

The Consumers' Association provides legal advice on consumer issues by telephone or letter, for a set fee. For further information, go to www.which.co.uk or call 0800 252 100.

Free legal advice

There are law centres all over the country that provide free legal advice and representation to those who cannot afford to pay. Law centre lawyers often specialise in areas of law such as housing, welfare rights, employment, disability and discrimination. Find your nearest law centre at www.lawcentres.org.uk or by calling 020 7387 8570.

The Disability Law Service also provides free legal advice for people with disabilities on a range of issues including employment, disability discrimination, welfare rights, education consumer and contract and community care. Contact them at www.dls.org.uk or by calling 020 7791 9800.

Public funding is still available for clinical negligence cases, but not for most personal injury cases. In that instance the solicitor will generally take your case under a conditional fee agreement, which means that if you lose the case you do not have to pay the costs, and if you win then your solicitor is entitled to charge an enhanced fee, although the majority of this is usually paid by the defendants. However, with a conditional fee agreement you will have to pay for an insurance premium to cover the defendant's costs should you lose the case.

Access to the courts

Access to courts is improving, although many are still housed in old, listed buildings where disabled access may be rather tortuous. If you are attending court, either as a litigant, a witness or a member of the jury, it is important to contact the court before you attend, to notify them of your needs and find out what facilities are there. Many courts now have their own websites with details of their access provisions. You can look at www.courtservice.co.uk for information or contact details for individual courts. The Bar Disability Council may also be able to help with information about the accessibility of different courts, tel: 020 7611 1321.

• Anne Luttman-Johnson is a client support manager with the national personal injury and clinical negligence law firm Alexander Harris. They have offices in central London, the North West and the Midlands. Anne can be contacted on 08700 778877. Further information is available at www.alexanderharris.co.uk

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My road to recovery

Only after stripping demands on her time and energy back to the bare minimum could Pamela Gorham's healing begin

After years spent living a Superwoman lifestyle, my world collapsed in 1988 when I developed ME. Nearly a decade later I am fortunate to lead a quiet, but reasonably normal life. My journey here has been a hard and often lonely one, characterised by frustration, confusion and trial and error. But looking back now, I can identify certain things that have helped me on the road to recovery.

The most important strategy has been keeping stress to an absolute minimum, giving myself time to rest and preserving my energy for healing. This meant adopting a routine of self-discipline and controlling the physical, mental and emotional demands of daily life. I would rest every afternoon for two or three hours, regardless of how tired I felt. My regular sleep patterns gave me extra energy every morning and evening, allowing me to make plans and helping me to feel that I was controlling my ME, rather than the other way round.

During the lowest point of my illness, I was forced to cut my life right back and I ended up living alone in a tiny house. This was the start of my real recovery, as I was able to pace myself and concentrate on my needs alone. It was a lonely time that forced me to confront many personal issues, but it helped me rediscover myself. Since then, I've learned that many people with ME have to break relationships and live alone in order to recover.

Learning about my condition was essential. Knowledge is power and, although in the early days very little was known about ME, receiving information and support from ME charities helped me to combat my feelings of isolation and inform me on aspects of the disease. My GP was also a rock – supportive, sympathetic and open-minded. He never doubted I was ill.

Like most ME patients, I tried expensive complementary therapies in my search for a cure. I tried acupuncture and shiatsu but found both to be too powerful. More useful was a regime of multivitamin and mineral pills, taken alongside evening primrose oil. I cleaned up my diet and experimented with detox regimes and fruit fasts, tracing which foods suited me. From this, I discovered that



I had no allergies, although substituting soya for milk products seemed to help me. Cutting out tea – something that is toxic to my system – has been my greatest problem; it has always been a weakness!

'Many people with ME have to break relationships and live alone in order to recover'

All these practical strategies were important, but the greatest challenge was a psychological one. Managing such a prolonged and debilitating illness forced me to use all my inner resources. I had been interested in Buddhist philosophy before my illness; now ME forced me to cultivate my beliefs. Daily meditation helped me to deal with the negative feelings that arose and gave me a sense of inner peace. Accepting my situation rather than struggling against it saved valuable energy.

I also developed an appreciation for the simple things that we usually take for granted: visits from friends, healthy food, and – most of all – the natural world. Sitting in the garden and listening to birdsong or watching the sunset gave me a great sense of peace.

That's not to say the frustration of the condition never overwhelmed me. It did. Sometimes I was so ill that I recorded nothing in my diary for weeks. When that happened I would shout out loud down the bottom of the garden. Giving expression to my feelings was empowering, and, for me, more useful than regular counselling, which I found exhausting.

The final part of my journey to recovery involved spiritual healing, a practice recommended by someone else who had ME. I attended a healing centre every week for more than two years and in that

time experienced many benefits. The healing was profoundly relaxing and as time went on, through the many subtle changes I felt, I began to realise I was slowly getting better.

My Superwoman days seem a world away now and I wonder how I had the energy to manage them. My journey to combat the effects of ME has been frightening and fascinating. It has taken me to strange places, taught me valuable lessons, and, in spite of everything, for that I am grateful.

• Pamela is now a registered healer with the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, tel: 0845 1232777 or see www.nfsh.org.uk

Managing pain – the US way

How do Americans with arthritis deal with their pain? Janet Cowlard finds out

I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis 34 years ago. Last year I was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to visit America to research arthritis pain management programmes.

Figures show that one in seven adults in Britain and one in three North Americans have arthritis. Self-management plays a vital role in the way people cope with pain. Arthritis Care (AC) has been delivering a disease-specific self-management programme for over ten years, but it's always useful to see how other countries run their courses.

In San Francisco, a self-management programme is being developed for people to use online. The course is interactive, and participant responses will be monitored by trained volunteer facilitators.

Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of arthritis in the UK. The majority experience constant pain, and everyday tasks are restricted. The Canadian Arthritis



Society is addressing this concern by providing an "Osteoarthritis early intervention programme". The course covers topics like exercise, pain management techniques, nutrition and weight management.

I saw a variety of courses run by the National Pain Foundation and the American Chronic Pain Association.

The patients I saw seemed more knowledgeable about their condition and medication options, and keen to take responsibility for their own healthcare.

I exchanged training materials with the organisations and brought home some packages. I hope this information will ultimately benefit those with arthritis in Britain.

• AC, tel: 0845 600 6868

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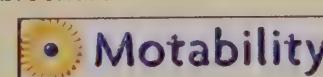
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How yoga helped my son

Michelle Murray found it almost impossible to get her son, John, to do his daily exercises until she discovered yoga. Now he has more control over his body and a new attitude to therapy

My son John, aged five, is beginning to understand that he is different from other children. He has cerebral palsy and getting him to participate in his daily therapy was a real problem until I discovered yoga for disabled children.

John was diagnosed with spastic diplegia when he was a year old. Since then my husband and I have moved to France because we found NHS treatment of cp in the UK to be inadequate.

In France the treatment is fairly immediate and comprehensive. John receives two physiotherapy and two occupational therapy sessions a week. He has also had two sets of Botox injections into the backs of his calves and has a variety of modified equipment and accessories for his condition.

However, none of the treatments or technologies make much of a difference to John's level of spasticity or the resulting effects without daily

input and encouragement from my husband and myself. The doctors and therapists have always emphasized the need for home-based therapeutic exercises, but getting my son to participate in these exercises was difficult – he found them hard, repetitive and boring, not a great starting point.

To gain flexibility and strength, I had been practicing yoga for a year, and I wondered if it might also help John. I thought it might offer a natural therapy to help lengthen John's muscles and give him some control over his spasticity. With

'I think the variety and challenge of yoga have changed John's outlook on daily exercising'

this in mind, I researched various cp websites until I found a book, *Yoga for the Special Child*, by the author Sonia Sumar.

Ms Sumar is a Brazilian yoga teacher who works with



children with cp, Down's syndrome and learning difficulties. She recommends starting yoga therapy for children early and has programme outlines for infants as young as three months. She outlines yoga positions for different age groups and abilities. I picked the set of positions relevant to John and I was surprised by how quickly he was able to master most of the poses that even I have trouble doing.

At first he was a little



Reach for the stars: Mum Michelle helps John with the standing yoga positions, but most he can do by himself

reluctant, but I guided him through each position and eased his spastic muscles as far as I could without causing pain. John made up names for some of the poses, so "the cobra" has been renamed "the hiss", after the snake in the animated version of Robin Hood, while "the locust" has become "the airplane".

In the beginning, John couldn't bend forward and touch the ground with his hands, as his hamstrings just wouldn't stretch that far. Yet after two months of yoga, he could easily reach forward and place his hands on the floor. I have to help him with the standing positions as he has poor balance, but he can do most of the other exercises himself.

The yoga sessions as set out in the book also include breathing exercises and activities to strengthen and focus the eyes. As John's eyesight has always been weak, he finds the latter particularly difficult, but we are slowly working on it.

It is difficult to say what the actual impact has been on John's ability to walk unaided, as he has had Botox injections and modifications done to his shoes in the last few months. But it is clear that John is enjoying his yoga. He

occasionally gets into yoga positions with his younger brothers when messing around, accompanied by cries of "See what I can do...! Hey mum, look!"

John is gaining control over his body and for the first time is actively participating in his daily home-based therapy. This is a minor miracle in itself as previously the mention of his therapy would have provoked a lot of whining and floppy passive resistance. I think the

'John is gaining control over his body and for the first time is actively participating in his daily home-based therapy'

variety and challenge of yoga have changed his outlook on daily exercising.

Yoga is not a replacement for proper medical analysis and treatment. But controlling the effects of cp involves continuous hard work in the home and I have found yoga an invaluable aid to gently broadening the range of movement available to my son.

- *Yoga for the Special Child*, by Sonia Sumar, is available from Special Yoga Publications, 1521 Chicago Ave, Evanston, IL 60201, tel: 1-847-869-8315, web: www.specialyoga.com

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Starring role

Following a disheartening search for jobs after leaving college, Ciara Evans landed a role as a celebrity research assistant. Now she spends her time in showbiz circles and flicking through *Hello!*

My dream job would be to work for a magazine like *Hello!*, writing celebrity features or some sort of media work, but for now I am really happy working as a celebrity research assistant for Mencap.

One of the best parts is getting paid to read magazines every week; I love every bit of finding out about celebrities.

To get here has not been easy. I have learning difficulties and when I was a child I struggled for a long time in mainstream school. Luckily I got a nice tutor and eventually went to special school, where I achieved five GCSEs.

At Guildford College of Further and Higher Education I took a continuing education course in maths and English, an NVQ in business administration and a GNVQ in tourism and leisure. When I began looking for jobs I got lots of interviews, but when they found out I went to special school employers would change their mind and say, "well obviously you're stupid" – even though I could not have coped at mainstream secondary school.

After a long search, and a short spell as a library assistant in Surrey, I became an administration assistant with Mencap. The charity soon recognised my abilities and about a year later I was offered a job as celebrity research assistant.

It also helped that my cousin is The Edge, lead guitarist from U2! I have met lots of celebrities through him. The band is due to tour soon and I am trying to persuade members to do a press conference on Mencap or

'I got lots of interviews, but when they found out I went to special school employers would change their mind'

perhaps wear T-shirts at one of their gigs.

Now, in my job, I mix with even more celebrities and there are many funny moments.

One I remember particularly was when a *Big Brother* contestant, who shall remain anonymous, was doing a parachute jump for us. It was early on a Saturday morning and I got a phone call, which was

bad because I'm not a morning person. It was the contestant panicking because she was still 30 miles from the jump site as training began. We cancelled and did the jump a week later.

I have also worked on the first issue of a magazine called *Biz*, which will be an annual publication, that was sent out to celebrities, their press officers, sponsors, donors and other supporters.

I wrote the editorial column and in the magazine we featured activities carried out by our ambassadors: Radio One DJ Jo Whiley, investigative reporter Donal McIntyre and pop stars Will Young and Lisa Scott-Lee. We also covered a party that took place in aid of a visit to Peru by the BBC Changing Rooms team, when they were going to decorate a school for children with learning difficulties.

But it's not all glamour. On normal work days, I arrive at the office at 8:45am. I go through all the celebrity magazines, looking for articles relating to famous people



doing charity work as well as stories about Mencap, and I file all of these.

I have the job of writing a biography of each celebrity so we can decide who might want to support Mencap. This includes making notes of what charities they support and if they have been involved in any controversies – we have to be wary of using celebrities who have not been politically correct in the past.

My celebrity post is part-time and when I am not there I work as an administration assistant for Lambeth Pathway, Mencap's employment service.

I really like both positions and I would like to see Mencap employ more people with learning difficulties.

There's still a lot I want to do in my job. The celebrities I would like to talk to because of their charity work include Bob Geldof and Dame Judi Dench. I also have huge admiration for Bono of U2 because of his work on world debt.

Of all the celebrities I have met, my favourite is the singer Ronan Keating. We first met before I started my job, just after his mother died of breast cancer. He has done so much for cancer awareness and, with his brothers and sister, even set up a charity called The Marie Keating Cancer Awareness Fund. I have now met him a number of times and he is always so warm and friendly.

• www.mencap.org.uk, tel: 020 7454 0454

HOME FOR ZOE

Help a child make their mark

Zoe is a happy baby with a beaming smile who wriggles her whole body with joy when spoken to. Zoe enjoys playing peek-a-boo, and according to Zoe's carers, she is a 'delight' to look after.

Zoe has Down's Syndrome and has had a successful heart operation. However, Zoe's overall health needs to be monitored by doctors. Zoe initially had great difficulties feeding and is consequently tube fed. Although Zoe continues to be tube fed, she's now starting to respond to occasionally being spoon-fed.

As both Zoe's birth family is white British Zoe needs a white British adoptive family, who can provide her with the stimulation and time she needs to meet her full potential. They will need to work with health professionals and accept the uncertainty of Zoe's development. Letterbox contact with her birth family is envisaged. An adoption allowance may be considered.

Call Islington Social Worker Kimberly Espinel on 0207 527 8781 for further information

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ILLUSTRATION BY CLARE CURTIS

Dear Ann

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Ann Darnbrough, who is disabled herself, is co-author of the *Directory for Disabled People* and other guides. Write to us at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



We can't move away

Now that I use a wheelchair and am married, the housing department at my council won't help my wife and I move. We want to live in another part of the country so that we can be near her children, whose help we need. Although the authorities say they will make improvements to our bungalow until they can find more suitable accommodation in the area, we cannot understand why they will not help us to move. John, email

It is always very difficult to get help to move from one area to another. Local authorities are reluctant to help in this way. I suggest you ask your relatives to contact the social services in their area. They could say how important it is that you move near them.

You could also contact your MP for support in this matter. With a general election in the offing, your MP may be

spending more time in the constituency and, therefore, be more helpful than usual.

Home is a prison

I have been disabled since 1982 and up until 1998 I was able to continue working full time. My wife and I were able to get a mortgage and were both on good wages. Then, as my disability got worse, I was forced to give up work. My wife also left her job to become my carer.

Unfortunately, my house has become my prison. I am unable to leave it because there are steps at the front and the back. My wheelchair only fits in two downstairs rooms.

I have been placed on the emergency housing list, but despite being on the list for four years, we have not been offered a single property.

When all this started, I tried to commit suicide and although I promised my wife I would never attempt it again, I think about it every day.

Vic, by email

It is important that you keep your courage up for your own and your wife's sake. When you do get out of this "prison", life will improve for you both.

In the first instance you should contact your housing office again, asking your doctor to provide you with a letter saying what a bad effect the long wait is having on your health. You could also contact your local councillor (details from your library or town hall). They will know exactly who to contact personally and be able to pull strings for you.

You do not say what your disability is, but you may find it helpful to contact the head office of the leading organisation for advice. They often have local representatives in the field who can offer personal help.

I am giving up

I am disabled with arthritis and other health problems.

I only get to go out once a week with an agency carer. I have a son, daughter and

Son's independence

My disabled son is nearly seventeen and is currently in a college where he gets one-to-one care. I also help with his care. He has told me that when he becomes eighteen he would like to live independently. He wants to share a flat with a friend who can also be his carer. I would continue to provide some support. How do we go about doing this?

Reine, Milton Keynes

Local authorities have a duty to consider the housing needs of disabled people. I am sure they would consider favourably your son's wish to be independent when he is eighteen-years-old. You can contact the housing department of your local authority and ask them how to proceed. They should also be able to provide for any care needs he will have. Does he have a social worker who knows him well and would support such a move?

I am not sure if you are saying that he already knows a friend with whom he could share accommodation and who could also provide care. In any case it would be important that any carer has a full understanding of their responsibilities. There may also be the question of payment for the carer.

Your son may find it helpful to contact the National Centre for Independent Living. His local councillor may also be able to help you – you'll get their contact details from your library.

• *National Centre for Independent Living*, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD, tel: 020 7587 1663, www.ncil.org.uk

sister, none of whom come to see me. I am fed up, lonely and sick of my daily routine. I have nothing to look forward to and I have given up hope.

I am 60, but remain young at heart and love music. How can I start enjoying life again?

Patricia, Derby

Whatever you do you must not give up. I have known disabled people who have not been able to leave their homes independently but who belong to local clubs and charities and work for them by telephone. You can work as a secretary or in any other way that would

help. The cost of phone calls is often reimbursed.

Your library will be able to send you a list of local organisations and you may be surprised at the number of activities that go on in your area, including music clubs.

As an active member of such a club, you would then receive interesting phone calls, which will offer you human contact and will make your home a livelier place. When you get on well with club members they may then be happy to pick you up and take you to meetings.

You say you are sick of the daily ritual and that nobody seems to care. So you need to turn the tables and think what you can do for other people by pursuing interests you already have or taking up interests you had not thought of before.

Good luck. There is a life you can enjoy. Dig hard and find it.



DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.

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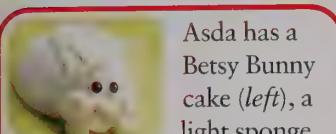


BRIGHT IDEAS

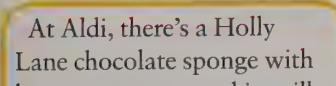
Anne Davies has some suggestions for a delicious Easter



Marks and Spencer has a decorated egg-shaped bunny cake (£9.99) and a Swiss chocolate luxury egg (£9.99). Children will love the Bunny Go Round (above), a white chocolate egg surrounded by bunnies (£5.99. Tel: 0845 302 1234, www.marksandspencer.com)



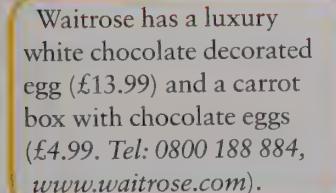
Asda has a Betsy Bunny cake (left), a light sponge cake with raspberry jam filling, decorated with white icing and bunnies (£4.98). Or try the Belgian chocolate eggs with a selection of chocolates (£5.98). For children, there's an Easter alternative, with the Easter Chick and Rabbit Piñatas, papier mache products with candy, paper masks and piñata busters, which follows an Italian custom (£8.98. Tel: 0500 100 055, www.asda.co.uk).



At Aldi, there's a Holly Lane chocolate sponge with buttercream, covered in milk chocolate and decorated with white and dark chocolate curls and mini eggs (£2.49). They also have a luxury milk chocolate bunny with a large blue bow (99p) and soft toys (lambs, bunnies and chicks) with chocolate eggs (below, £2.99. Tel: 08705 134262, www.aldi-stores.co.uk).



Lindt has gold chocolate bunnies in various sizes, all with red ribbons and bells, that will delight both adults and children (from £1.29). They also have mini eggs and gift sets (from £1.99). For a special treat, there's the Swiss traditional deluxe egg with Swiss chocolates (£9.99. Tel: 01895 445 821, www.lindt.com).



Waitrose has a luxury white chocolate decorated egg (£13.99) and a carrot box with chocolate eggs (£4.99. Tel: 0800 188 884, www.waitrose.com).

Tesco has some mouth-watering Easter treats in their Finest range, including a Belgian chocolate cake (£9.99) and a white chocolate egg with truffle chocolates (£9.99). For children, there's the Easter Parade, a chirpy chick with a chocolate egg and mini eggs (£3.99). For those with allergies, there's a chocolate egg with marshmallows in the Free From range (£3.49). Tel: 0800 50 55 55, www.tesco.com.

Green and Black's dark chocolate collection includes a premier organic egg, which is made from dark bittersweet chocolate that has 70 per cent cocoa solids and comes with 12 handmade chocolates (£9.99). Or how about the rich creamy white chocolate eggs (£2.99. See www.greenandblacks.co.uk).

Sainsbury's has a Belgian milk chocolate egg with truffles from the Taste the Difference range (£9.99). For children there's an Easter Egg Hunt pack, including chocolate eggs, candy eggs, markers and stickers (£9.99). They also have the traditional Simnel cake (left), which you should be able to find in most stores (£8.99. Tel: 0800 63 62 62, www.sainsbury.co.uk).



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EASYKIT

Lucy Andrews answers your questions

"I am on my own at home most days, as I have difficulty getting out and about by myself."

Consequently, using the phone is really important to me. But now I find that even this is getting difficult. What should I do?"

The telephone provides an opportunity for social contact, and is also a way of accessing home delivery services and summoning help in an emergency. So it is a vital tool for independent living.

One of the common difficulties is getting to the phone in time to answer it. If you hurry you put yourself at risk of falling. Having several extensions so that you have phones in key rooms might be one solution, or a cordless phone could be the answer.

Cordless phones can be carried in a pocket or in a bag attached to a walker, but must be replaced onto the base unit from time to time to recharge the battery. Some cordless phones have the option of several handsets so that you can place them conveniently in different rooms. However, there are disadvantages: the sound quality may not be as good as corded phones; they have to be used within a specified range; the handset can be mislaid, and the buttons can be fiddly. The Freestyle 60 from BT has larger

buttons that have a good colour contrast so should be easier to manage. (£29.99, see phone book for local shops, www.shop.bt.com).

Traditional phones are also available with large, easy-to-see buttons that are well spaced, so they should help anyone who has difficulty with finer movement. There are several on the market but the Mybelle 630 (£17.99) has a very simple layout with clear numbers on large square buttons; and the

Mybelle 640 (£29.99, right), with smaller main keys, has extra buttons for stored numbers with the facility to insert pictures of relatives and friends (Lazerbuilt, tel: 01438 743753, www.lazerbuilt.co.uk).

The Dial-talk by Cobolt Systems (below) is a portable system to make dialling easier. It has a keypad that is used to enter the number, with each digit being spoken out as it is entered so that mistakes can be identified and amended. The device is then placed near the telephone handset and the number is transmitted down the phone



line using the number tones. The device has the facility to store 10 regularly used numbers (£34.95, tel: 01493-700172, www.cobolt.co.uk).

A hands-free telephone can also make use easier. These phones can be used in the conventional way but also have a built-in microphone and loudspeaker so that you can speak and listen without holding the handset. The Doro 312C by Doro UK (£24.99) has good sized buttons, can be used hands-free and also has on-hook dialling so that you don't have to lift the handset before you dial out (tel: 01527 584377, www.doro-uk.com).

For further information look at the DLF's fact sheet, *Choosing a Telephone Textphone & Accessories*, on our website www.dlf.org.uk; or phone the helpline on 0845 130 9177, or email us at advice@dlf.org.uk. Information is also available from Ricability, who have written a report called "Staying in Touch": tel: 020 7427 2460, www.ricability.org.uk.

Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the DLF. If you've got a question you'd like Lucy to answer, email editor@disabilitynow.org.uk, or post it to the usual address.

What's On

The Down's Syndrome Association is holding Choice Matters, a one-day conference on sexuality and relationships, at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on 11 March. The day will include presentations and workshops. £75. Tel: 01656 674074, www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

The Deaf Association of Northern Ireland (DANI) is holding a BSL/ISL recognition conference in Belfast on 11 March. Tel: 02890 387700, textphone: 02890 387706. The North West Deaf Association (NWDA) is holding a BSL recognition conference in Preston on 19 March. Textphone: 0800 652 2965, email: emmac@bda.org.uk. There will also be a similar conference in Exeter on 19 March. Free, but booking required. Tel: 01392 383634, email: dave.slocombe@devon.gov.uk. See also www.bda.org.uk

Disability Capital 2005, hosted by Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, will be held on 17 March in London. It will be part of a week of disability equality events, and will include reports and forums for people to have their say. Novotel West Conference Centre, 1 Shortlands, Hammersmith. Free, but registration is necessary. Tel: 020 7983 4100, www.london.gov.uk

The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) has extended its helpline service for disabled and older people, which will now be open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday. The helpline uses an equipment database to respond to requests for information. Tel: 0845 130 9177.

Correction

In last month's holiday pages, the piece on Finland was attributed to Kirsty Stanton. It is actually Kirsty Wayland. We apologise for the error.

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR (Sponsorship & Fundraising)
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

The National Theatre of Scotland is a significant new development in theatre for Scotland. We are seeking an inspirational team who will assist the further progress of the Theatre and set and implement the vision that will match this cultural opportunity.

The National Theatre of Scotland is one of the most exciting and important initiatives in European theatre for many years. Formed as a non building-based flagship organisation, the National Theatre collaborates with venues, theatre companies and artists to make world-class national and international productions for audiences in Scotland and beyond and to enhance the profile of Scottish talent.

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The Communications Director will lead across the areas of marketing, press & PR and audience development to promote the National Theatre of Scotland as a flagship arts organisation and to influence the way the organisation is perceived by audiences and key stakeholders. The ideal candidate will be a senior manager with excellent organisational and interpersonal skills and the ability to plan and deliver strategic initiatives.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR (Sponsorship & Fundraising)

The Development Director will develop and implement corporate giving, individual giving and trust & foundation strategies for the National Theatre of Scotland. The ideal candidate will have wide ranging experience in raising funds from donors, sponsors, trusts and foundations and will be able to demonstrate significant successes in this area.

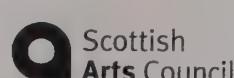
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

The Finance & Administration Manager will report to and work with the Executive Director and other staff members as appropriate to ensure effective and strategic financial planning, control and reporting on the National Theatre of Scotland, as well as to devise, implement and manage effective administrative and personnel procedures. Applicants must possess an appropriate accountancy or finance qualification and will have an understanding of the arts or charitable sectors.

The salaries will reflect the seniority and importance of these posts. Glasgow based.

For an information pack, please contact info@nationaltheatrescotland.com or telephone 0141 221 0970.

The National Theatre of Scotland acknowledges the need and right of everyone connected with the organisation to be treated with respect and dignity, in an environment in which a diversity of backgrounds and experiences is valued.



Closing date for applications Thursday, 31 March 2005.

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• Personals

MAN 53 HAIR and beard now grey. Slight speech impediment due to Ependymo Blastoma operation, seeks lady preferably same age for long term relationship. Box no: 306

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

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It has long been recognised that giving evidence at court can be stressful and upsetting. Witnesses may need support to guide them through the court process. In turn this will ensure that more cases go ahead and confidence in the Criminal Justice System is improved.

Based at the City of London Criminal Justice Unit at Bishopsgate Police station, you will be part of a team of Police and Crown Prosecution Service staff who will deal with all aspects of witness liaison. This will entail providing regular updates on cases by letter and telephone, responding to enquiries and completing a standard needs assessment of each victim and witness to ensure a quality service is provided. You will be keeping a comprehensive diary and maintaining computer and written records of all cases. You would also provide access to a range of support options and be able to refer particularly sensitive issues to the Witness Care Unit Sergeant, whilst signing off trial related financial assistance where required.

There will also be a need for the successful applicants to cover for the supervisor during periods of annual leave, sickness etc and to perform a role within the Force Casualty Bureau as required.

To be successful in this post you will have to be able to evidence your respect for race and diversity; work effectively as a team member; provide a high level of service to customers; communicate effectively and be able to adapt to meet the needs of the witnesses; gather and analyse information to be an effective solution provider; plan and organise activities in an orderly and well-structured way; and take responsibility for your own actions and focus on achieving results.

The City of London Police welcomes applications from all sections of the community and will not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or religious belief. All applications are considered and selection decisions made strictly according to merit.

Applicants are advised to ensure that they address all the selection criteria fully on the application form. Only the information contained on your application form will be available to the shortlisting panel. Please note that CVs are not accepted.

For an application pack please email BM.SCD@City-of-london.police.uk with your name and full postal address or telephone 020-7601 2364, quoting reference WCO/CJU

NB This post was previously advertised in Evening Standard and City of London Police and Corporation of London websites. Applicants who have already applied need not apply again – application forms are still be considered for short-listing.

Closing Date: 11th March 2005

• Cars/Vans/carevers

HAND CONTROLS FOR Vauxhall Astra 1999. Less than 2 years' old, in very good condition, asking £150 ono. Tel: 01830 520379.

MERCEDES VITO 113 2.0 petrol, P reg (Dec 96), 64k miles, 10 months' MOT. Yellow, CD player, Alloys, rear low floor and ramp. Seats 5 plus wheelchair. In good order. £8,250. Tel: 0131 455 7894 (Edinburgh). Email: micmac@dsl.pipex.com

FIAT DOBLO ELX 1.9 JTDSR, Capri blue, Automotive Group wheelchair conversion with winch. Less than 1k miles, 2004 reg, diesel, e/windows, CD player, pas, seats 4 plus wheelchair. £11,500 ono. Tel: 01263 861839 or email: Shirley.whitehouse@btinternet.com

FIAT SCUDO 1.9 T reg, diesel, 20k miles, 4 passengers plus wheelchair, low floor ramp, new MOT. Good working condition, only 2 owners, £6,750 ono. Tel: 0777 9662350 (London).

CHAIRMAN BERLINGO 1.9D 1998, 26k miles, lowering suspension. Electric belts. £7,500 or best offer. Tel Alan: 01865 774807 (Oxford). Email: ajr737@Tiscali.co.uk

SUZUKI WAGON R+ 1.3GL, Jubilee Liberty extra low floor conversion for wheelchair access at rear. Reg Dec 01, 51 plate, only 4k miles, fsh, Mot 'til December. £6,500 ono. Email: michael.j.walters@ntlworld.com tel: 01924 526695.

ELAP ROTATING CAR seat, fits Peugeot. £250 ono. Tel: 01778 380068 (Peterborough).

1998 FORD COURIER converted van, accommodates wheelchair user, R reg, 1800 cc, diesel. Additional rear heater/extractor units. Less than 7,200 miles from new, many extras. Full MOT, 6 months' tax, 2 owners. £3,500. Tel: 023 8073 2847. Email: terencemjamieson@btinternet.com

MERCEDES VANEO AMBIENTE 1.6. Manual, metallic silver, air con, electric front window and rear vents, CD player, has wheelchair ramps, restraints and fixing points. Seven seater, great small MPV or big load area when 2 seats are removed – which are easy. Mercedes Service history. 15,000 miles registered 2003 so has balance of warranty to it. £9,500. Tel Matt: 07759 555 002 (Wetherby, West Yorks).

VW SHARAN TDI 1.9, 54 reg, Stonehenge grey metallic, grey Jet fabric upholstery. Beautiful car inside and out, highest specification and comfort. Excellent ramped rear access adaptation by Jubilee. Innovative wheelchair pod design, seats 5 plus wheelchair passenger. Bereavement forces sale, only 4k miles. Costs £24,300 new in Sept 04, asking £19,500. Tel: 01243 826096 (Sussex coast).

MILFORD ELECTRIC PERSON lift, very simple to use, lifts up to 20 stone, fits most cars. Cost £2,000 a year ago, in very good condition and hardly used with all relevant literature. £500 ono. Tel: 01255 433688 (Colchester).

MERCEDES V230 AMBIENTE, auto, met silver, tinted glass, T reg, 75k miles, high spec with twin sun roofs. Rear ramp, w/c passenger conversion (front/rear) plus 2 rear seats. Excellent condition, £9,900. Balder powered wheelchair (Recaro) also available. Tel: 01939 235611.

MERCEDES V280 AMBIENTE, auto, '98 R reg, met silver, 37k miles, grey leather, heated electric front seats, 2 rear seats, underfloor side lift and electric sliding door. 6 way driver's seat, electric rotating pass seat, air con, CD, twin electric sun roofs, tv rear view monitor. Recent MOT, only one owner, fsh, available April end. £12,000 ono. Tel: 01423 770184 (Yorkshire).

MERCEDES VITO 2.2 diesel, 52 reg, 50k miles, Ricon underfloor ramp with side access. 7 seater van without wheelchair, 4 with (rear seats removable). Navy blue, sunroof, e/windows and mirrors, cruise control, CD player, roof mount DVD player, alloys. Full Mercedes service history, full MOT and road tax. In immaculate conditions, still under warranty, £14,900 ovno. Tel: 01462 455094 (Herts) or mobile: 07833 374988.

• Wheelchairs/scooter

CYCLONE HEAVY DUTY 4 wheel mobility scooter with basket, front and rear lights, indicators. Range 20-25 miles on full charge. £500. Tel: 07931 518555.

JET 3 ELECTRIC wheelchair with charger, approx 6 months' old with full instruction manual. £1,200 ono. Tel: 01746 764407.

SPECTRA POWERCHAIR, ELECTRIC wheelchair with dual control. Never been used, in original wrapping with full instructions. Cost £2,800, asking £800 ono. Tel: 01932 862901 (Surrey).

POWERTEC F40 ELECTRIC wheelchair with charger, 10 miles on full charge, left hand control, variable speed settings with max speed 4 mph. In good condition, regularly maintained with instruction manual, £450 ono. Tel: 0191 297 0735.

INVACARE STORM ELECTRIC wheelchair, green, recent service, £700 ono. Tel: 01777 705765 (Retford).

AQUASOOTHE TAVEL LITE Elite electric scooter. Cost £2,000 new, used for 5 months, sale due to bereavement, easily dismantles into two parts for easy stowage in car. Complete with 2 batteries and charger, max speed 4 mph with variable speed settings, 13 miles on full charge, under seat storage. Any sensible offers will be considered. Tel: 01604 781516 (Northampton).

PUMA POWERCHAIR, RECARO comfort seat, tilts. Vgc, £2,500 ono. Tel: 01676 532700 or 024 7669 2878 (Coventry).

Linage cont'd pg 44



**Disability, Pregnancy and
Parenthood international**

web: <http://www.dppi.org.uk/>

Disability, Pregnancy & Parenthood International (DPPI):
A national service providing information to parents, prospective parents, professional workers and others on disability and parenthood.

INFORMATION OFFICER

P/T 14 hours p.w. Salary £10,495 (pro rata on NJC point 31; pay award pending). Based at National Centre for Disabled Parents in North London.

To be part of team running enquiry service, researching and producing information resources, working collaboratively with other providers. This post includes particular brief concerning visual impairment.

Excellent communication skills required. Awareness and sensitivity to concerns of disabled parents essential (personal experience an advantage).

Closing date for receipt of completed application forms: 9th March. Interviews 18th March.

For application pack contact via email: rosmansfield@ic24.net

No telephone requests, please.

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M	Renault Traffic 1.9D.	Underfloor ramp. Very nice	£2,995
O2	Vauxhall Agila	Low floor with rear seat conversion	£9,495
X	Renault Kangoo	With low floor & rear seats from	£8,995
Y	Citroen Dispatch 1.9D.	Lowered floor & rear seats	£11,995
Y	Renault Kangoo	With low floor & fold out ramps from	£10,995
X	Volkswagen Diesel Transporter.	Ramp & rear seats	£12,995
O2	Citroen Berlingo 1.9D.	Lowered rear floor. Very nice	£13,995
51	Renault Kangoo	Lowered floor & rear passenger seats	£11,295
O3	Daihatsu Hi-Jet.	Ramp, winch and rear seats. 7k only	£7,995
O3	Volkswagen Transporter D.	Chair-lift and rear seats	£14,995
O2	Renault Kangoo.	Lowered floor & rear seats	£11,495
O4	Mercedes Vaneo Auto	Fully automated ramp/tailgate	£25,995
O3	Chrysler Grand Voyager	Diesel. Low floor lux MPV	£23,995
53	Toyota Powerbus	Access Lift Diesel. As totally new	£15,995
52	Renault Kangoo.	Low floor and rear seats. Choice	£11,995
54	Mercedes Vaneo 1.6 Auto.	Lowered floor. 4 seats.	£20,995
54	Fiat Doblo Hi Roof	Diesels. 5 seats, wheelchair access	£9,795
O3	Renault Kangoo	Automatic. Low floor rear seats.	£13,995
X	Mercedes V Class Auto.	Ambiente low floor + leather	£18,995

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2002 02 Toyota Hiace 2.5TD, A/C, lift, 18,000 miles, 1 owner		£12,995
2001 Y Mercedes Sprinter, Drive from wheelchair		£19,995
2001 Y Peugeot Expert Constables, 1 owner, 38,000 miles		£10,995
2000 X Brotherwood Sharan TDi, 46,000 miles		£18,500
2000 W Mercedes V220 CDi Ambiente, side lift		£19,995
1999 V VW Transporter TDi, Auto + Lift, 14,000 miles		£10,995
1999 V Fiat Ulysses Jubilee, Air Con, 34,000 miles		£9,250
1999 T Toyota Hiace D, with tail lift, 44,000 miles		£8,495
1999 T Toyota Cruiser, petrol, PAS, c/l, 1 owner, 40,000 miles		£7,750
1998 S Peugeot Expert Constables, 1 owner		£7,995
1998 R Sharan Automotive TDi, Auto, 1 owner		£10,995
1997 R Brothewood Sharan 2.0, Auto, 1 owner, 52,000 miles		£12,995
1993 L Ford Courier, Auto, Chairman, 1 owner		£3,995
VW Transporters & Caravels	Choice of 9	
Mercedes Vitos	Choice of 7	
Kangoo & Berlingo models	Choice of 10	
Trafic & Vanette Cargo models	Choice of 8	

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• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

Trainee Pushto Interpreter/Translator with skills in Farsi/Dari (temporary post to June 2006)

£17,409 - £19,092 pro rata
(Fixed term contract to obtain Dip. Public Service interpreting)

18.25 hours per week

Brasshouse Translation and Interpreting Service

We are looking for a trainee interpreter/translator with experience of working as an interpreter in a multilingual environment. Based within BTIS, you will also work at other designated locations, interpreting into and from Pushto, using English as a main language. You will also have good skills in written and spoken Farsi and/or Dari. You will also translate written documents into Pushto and English and proof read documents to a high degree of accuracy.

Ref: EC4261DN

Trainee Kurdish Interpreter/Translator with skills in Arabic (temporary post to June 2006)

£17,409 - £19,092
(Fixed term contract to obtain Dip. Public Service Interpreting)

Brasshouse Translation and Interpreting Service

We are looking for a trainee interpreter/translator with experience of working as an interpreter in a multilingual environment. Based within BTIS, you will also work at other designated locations, interpreting into and from Kurdish, using English as a main language. You will also have good skills in written and spoken Arabic. You will also translate written documents into Kurdish and English and proof read documents to a high degree of accuracy.

EC4262DN

These posts will terminate after completion of the DPSI. The aim of these appointments is that you will gain the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting during the year and then be available to work as a freelance interpreter.

Informal enquiries to Carl Marshall on 0121 464 2776.

For further details and application form contact 0121 464 3717 (24 hour answerphone) or e-mail: csrecruitment@birmingham.gov.uk or visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/jobs quoting appropriate reference.

Closing date: 11th March 2005.

Birmingham City Council



diversity is the key to our city

SCOPE

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Working together to make a difference.....

Scope is a national disability organisation whose focus is people with Cerebral Palsy. Our aim is that disabled people achieve equality.

Team Secretary

Westerham

£13,039 p.a. plus Outer Fringe Allowance £469

35 hrs p.w.

(This post is reserved for disabled people only)

Every year 1 in 400 babies are born with Cerebral Palsy. Scope provides a range of support, information and campaigning services both locally and nationally.

You will provide full secretarial, administrative and telephone service within a busy Community Team and assist in the work of the Partnership Area as directed by the Community Team Manager. You will be a team player who can prioritise competing demands and work well under pressure.

Ideally you:

- will have experience of a busy, multi-tasking department
- will have excellent secretarial, IT, written and verbal communication skills
- must be flexible
- are committed to Scope's vision of Equality.

Have you got what it takes?

For an application form (NO CV's please), please contact: Scope SE & Southern Community Team, 22 High Street, Westerham, Kent TN16 1RG. Tel: 01959 564686.

Email: southeast@scope.org.uk

Closing date: 25th March 2005.

Interview date: 21st April 2005.

Sign the equality pledge at www.timetogetaequal.org.uk

Registered charity no 208231

• Holidays (cont'd pg 43)

PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners"

Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service.

Please ring or write for colour brochure.
R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Beward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617
www.penroseburden.co.uk

Burgundy

Beautiful Bourgogne wine region, South-East France.

Les Vignes de Louzy
Large ground floor gite in a 150yr old substantial stone Farmhouse. Sleeps 2/4. Newly renovated. Specially adapted for disabled holidaymakers. Wheelchair accessibility. Large en-suite bedroom with 2 electric profiling beds and large specially equipped bathroom. Large open plan kitchen/diner/living room. Internal double garage with electronic door. Former vineyard with extensive grounds on the edge of a small village. Jane & Colin Holman, Tel: 01622 673491/755120; Fax: 01622 763688; E-mail: info@jcgtites.co.uk; Website: www.jcgtites.co.uk

Hertfordshire

Petasfield Stables Holiday Cottage

Stunning, wheelchair accessible converted stables, with beautiful views over the Hertfordshire countryside. Riding and stable management courses available. Sleeps four, wheel-in shower, shower chair provided. Electric sink and hob riser in kitchen, wild flower garden and BBQ. Historic Hertford town centre 1.5 miles. Easy reach of London, Cambridge and St Albans and major road links. For more information, contact: Helen Clark: 01992 504201. helen@petasfieldstables.co.uk

CAREFREE HOLIDAYS SPAIN
Traditional Spanish farmhouse with pool. Fully wheelchair accessible. Half board or self catering. Within a 1/2 hours drive from coast. Accessible minibus for airport transfers and excursions. For brochure phone 0034 968437010. Email: info@CarefreeSpain.com Web: www.CarefreeSpain.com

Hopton Holiday Village.

Heated access caravans available on Norfolk coast between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. 2 bedroomed unit suitable for wheelchair access and 3 bedroomed unit suitable for persons with some mobility. For further details contact 01493 603845.

10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND

Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12, fully accessible and large. King size bed with ensuite bathroom, wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01805 601147.

HARTGROVE FARM, DORSET

Award winning holiday cottages on working farm. A really lovely holiday for disabled guests and their families. Glorious countryside and views. Logfires, C.H. mobile hoist and other equipment. Care homes very welcome.

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www.hartgrovefarm.co.uk

Safaris to Kenya

Specialist Safaris for people with disabilities.

Customised to your needs. Lift equipped vehicles. Great wildlife viewing.
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safaris@greenleopard.com
02 254 20577304 (Kenya)

• Holidays (cont'd pg 44)

Las Piedras Holidays

Inspirational holidays in beautiful area of southern rural Spain.

Accessible transport, exciting excursions, swimming pool with hoist. Flexible holidays to suit your needs – full board, B&B or self-catering in superb fully wheelchair accessible guesthouse. Contact us now for info/brochure, call or fax 00 34 952 033 100 or email us.

info@laspiedras.co.uk
www.laspiedras.co.uk

HOLIDAY FLATS FOR DISABLED GUESTS
at Par in Cornwall, which is run by Scope. Each flat sleeps 6 – 1 guest must be disabled. New showers, new microwave ovens, heating all bedrooms, suitable for w/chairs. Vacancies April £65 pw, May/June £100pw July/Aug £105pw. Reg Charity No. 221875. Contact the Manager, tel: (01579) 344108.

The Algarve, Portugal

Small hotel owned and run by English family. Home from home. Happy and friendly. Home cooked food. Diets catered for. All bedrooms en-suite. Our own swimming pool and grass bowling green. Golfing bookings can be made. We are fully equipped for wheelchair users, their families and friends. Met at Faro airport.

For brochures and flights with A.T.O.L. agents, tel: 00 351 289 396589, tel UK: 01895 471 631, fax: 00 351 289 394924.

MOONPENNY COTTAGE

North York Moors National Park

Fully wheelchair accessible self-catering holiday cottage. Sleeps 4. Designed specifically for the wheelchair user. Single story, Grade 2 listed converted farm building, south facing, overlooking beautiful valleys and hills beyond. Large sitting/dining room with open fire, kitchen, wheel-in shower room with shower seat, handrails to shower and toilet area.

All work surfaces, basins and appliances at wheelchair level. One double, one twin bedroom.

Full details/ brochure from
Mrs Amicia Bentley
TEL: 01751 460311
www.mici.supanet.com

Woodhead Cottage Dulnain Bridge, Speyside.

Cosy cottage by private woodland setting with attractive bird/wildlife. Great Highland holiday/touring base. Highest disabled category STB approved. 3 bedrooms, one with ensuite ceiling track/hoist to bed, toilet and bath. Level wheel-in chair shower, highly recommended by wheelchair user. Sleeps 6. For brochure contact: Ian & Catriona Shearer, tel: 01479 851298. www.woodhead.co.uk

JERSEY
LA ROCCO SELF-CATERING APARTMENTS
Offering panoramic views over St Ouen's Bay. Apartments with disabled facilities, accommodating 2-8 persons. For free brochure: tel: 01534 743378, fax: 01534 746844, e-mail: larocco@localdial.com website: www.laroccoapartments.com

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser. Disability Employment Advisers are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and Jobcentres and offer a wide range of advice and support. They can help you find a job, or stay in work if you are already employed.

The specialist service that Disability Employment Advisers provide, includes:

- advice on finding and keeping a job
- information on training
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice on employing disabled people.

Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre for further information.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk



jobcentreplus

Including Jobcentres and social security offices

Tower Hamlets is a distinctive, unique London Borough that is home to a diverse, vibrant, multi-cultural community. As part of an exciting regeneration programme, we aim to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in the area. It's also an ideal opportunity to further your career.

Social Services

Disability Options Team - Mile End Hospital

Care Manager

£28,332 - £34,365

Tower Hamlets Social Services Physical Disability Team in partnership with Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust currently offers a care management service to adults (18-65 years) who are receiving rehabilitative treatment from the Disability Options and Community Stroke teams. You will be part of a forward thinking, multi-disciplinary health and social care team.

Have you previous experience of devising, implementing and reviewing care packages for adult service users who have complex care needs; using fair access to care and eligibility criteria? Have you a good working knowledge of community care legislation? Can you work within a multi-disciplinary team, with the ability to promote and provide an effective care management service? You will be supported by an excellent and on-going package of training opportunities. Ref: 9511FEB009.

For further details regarding the post, please contact: Rose Bonaparte on tel: 020 8223 8441.

Closing date: 11th March 2005.

For an application pack, please call the 24 Hour Recruitment Line on 020 7364 4488. A special Minicom service is also available for those with a hearing or speech impairment on 020 7364 4489. Please quote the reference number.

We shall ensure fairness and equal opportunities throughout our workforce and in service delivery. We welcome applications from suitably skilled candidates regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or age.

A Workforce to Reflect the Community, Committed to Positive Action.
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk



Can you help to unlock Leicester's potential?

Disabled Persons Access Officer

£10,933.50 - £12,354 pa

(for an 18.5 hour week)

We are seeking a Disabled Persons Access Officer to work part time (18.5 hours per week) to help us facilitate the best possible access for disabled people to the built and natural environment of the city. You will be working in one of the largest local authority urban design groups in the country – an award winning, multi-disciplinary team committed to raising environmental quality and making successful places.

You will need

- at least three years experience working on disability issues in the context of the built environment
- an excellent knowledge of all disabilities and of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- experience of producing complex reports and of presenting these at meetings
- experience of interpreting technical drawings & plans and negotiating
- basic keyboard skills

It would also be desirable if you have experience of building construction and materials in the context of access issues and of carrying out access audits of buildings. A built environment related qualification would be an advantage as would experience of working within a local authority.

**Closing date 16th March 2005 Interview/Test date w/c 4th April 2005
Post No D897/G**

Application forms and further details

Please contact the Job Shop, Leicester City Council, New Walk Centre, Leicester LE1 6ZG between 8.30am - 4.30pm or telephone 0116 252 7010 (24 hours).

Minicom service - office hours only.

Email: jobshop@leicester.gov.uk



www.leicester.gov.uk/jobs

Algarve Carvoeiro
Spacious private villa with pool and hoist overlooking golf course. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms including wheel-in shower. Totally level throughout. For more information call Debbie Wells on 01277 354313

An idyllic & peaceful cumbria beauty spot. The Tranquil Otter. Lux lodges with sauna & whirlpool bath/hot-tub, logburner. All lakeside position with picture book views. Outstanding w/c accessible lodges, paths, shops etc. Wheely Boat 01228 576661. www.thetranquilotter.co.uk

Cornwall - Nr Truro.
2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

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"Opening up the world for people with disabilities"
We tailor holidays to your requirements, wherever you wish to travel & have a range of "ready made" vacations in Europe to meet your needs. See our web site: www.world-access-travel.com or contact us by e mail, phone or letter!

World Access Travel.Com, 10 Oaklands Business Park, Ferndale, CF43 4UG, Email: info@world-access-travel.com; tel: 01443 732625.

Wheelchair accessible gite in South West France

Tranquil holiday destination in rural LOT region (famous for its gastronomy and its wine). Picturesque small town of Montcuq with fantastic Sunday market 2 miles. Swimming pool on site. Renovated with disabled people in mind (lift to all levels, wheel in showers and electric scooter available at no extra cost). Sleeps 8. Email: clementisabelle@yahoo.co.uk or call 020 8674 8761.

Holiday flats on Exmouth seafront, wheel-in shower/wc ensuite, some electric beds, sleeps from 4 to 10, fully furnished/equipped to high standard, level walks to town and along seafront, ramps and access to beach, care can be arranged. Contact Judith Olisa, 1 Alston Terrace, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 1BH. 01395 275367, mob:07832110927 judeolisa@fastmail.fm

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

The University of Kent frequently recruits for clerical assistants, technicians and IT assistants, administrative staff, research and lecturing staff across our faculties.

Staff who have a disability are currently under-represented and we wish to improve the diversity of our workforce
The University is a member of the double tick pledge and will interview all applicants who meet the essential criteria.

For information about our vacancies please check our recruitment website

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/registry/personnel/vacancies.htm>.

For details in different formats, please apply to The Personnel Department. Textphone users please phone

01227 824145.

KENT
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We actively promote equal opportunity in education and employment and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.

• Holidays

GAER COTTAGES

5* Quality self-catering cottages for ALL the family with an emphasis on facilities for disabled visitors. To cat 1, 2 & 3. 6 of the 9 traditional Welsh stone cottages are single storey, easily accessible from the car park. Luxurious indoor heated swimming pool with hoist. Games room. Holiday care award winners.

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Magnificent farm house peacefully situated in glorious countryside. Sleeps up to 13. 6 bedrooms. 4 bathrooms. Ground floor fully accessible with large en suite bedroom. W.C. Bath. Wheel in shower. Private gardens with heated swimming pool (summer '05). 5 mins to village with shops, restaurants and weekly market. Beautiful, unspoilt beaches 25 mins. Tel: 01747 812019. Fax: 01747 811066. Mobile: 07970 000680.

Email: smart@hargrovefarm.co.uk
Web: www.normandyfarmhouses.co.uk

Willow Cottage – The Black Isle

5 mins drive Inverness. Beautifully equipped, Tourist Board 3 stars with Disability Award 2. 1 double, 1 twin, both ensuite. Situated on a working croft amid lovely scenery with wildlife park close by. Moray Firth dolphins, kites, buzzards, deer etc, and our Nessie! Inverness offers good food, cinema, theatre etc. Brochure/details, tel: 01463 731455, website: www.highlanddisabledcottageholidays.co.uk www.culbincrofthouse.co.uk

PAIGNTON, DEVON

Six Berth wheelchair accessible caravan within a mile of the beach. Site facilities include club, indoor and outdoor pools, sauna, steam room, children's play area. Tel. Devon ASBAH on 01803 522256 – www.dasbah.com

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOLIDAY COTTAGE IN RURAL FRANCE

Charming cottage in Dordogne region available for rent. Reasonable rates. If you are looking for peace and quiet, warm weather, good food and wine, this is the place for you. Call or fax Ed Passant on 01233 731 097 or e-mail: ed.passant@mail.com web: www.accessholidays.com

BE NEXT TO THE SEA AT HEYSHAM

Magnificent view, miles of level promenade. Wheelchair friendly, tracking and portable hoists. Bunk beds, mobile chair for ensuite shower/toilet. 3 bedrooms/lounge/dining/kitchen/study/tv/dvd. Close to Lakeland, Bowland, RSPB reserves etc. Free cycles and telescope use. For more information and bookings, telephone Allan or Jan on: 01274 588142

Western Canada!!

**Are you disabled?
Totally in a wheelchair?**

Well it is possible, and hassle-free when you travel in a motorhome specifically equipped to meet your needs. I am your tour guide and driver. You enjoy the holiday with your family, friends or carer. For information

Tel: 01653 628607

WEST SUSSEX A Luxury wheelchair accessible caravan sited on a wheelchair friendly site in Selsey. Close to the sea, site facilities include an indoor pool complex, kids club, restaurant and evening entertainment. For further details contact Brian **01843 226243**.

BRYN MEIRION LODGE
Amlwch Road, Benllech, Anglesey, North Wales, LL74 8SR. Tel: 01248 853118. Hotel adapted for wheelchair users. Ensuite specialised rooms with ceiling hoists and electric beds. Also available 1 self-catering unit. Book now to avoid disappointment. www.brynmeyrionlodge.co.uk

Brittany Cottage to let. Adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson.** Tel **(01924) 499220.**

**GOING ON HOLIDAY ??
DO YOU NEED TO HIRE
MOBILITY EQUIPMENT ?**
**COSTA DEL SOL
COSTA BLANCA
MALLORCA
ALGARVE**
BOOK ONLINE
www.mobilityabroad.com
Tel. 0845 644 2892
MobilityAbroad

**Great self-catering in
South West Wales**
Sŵn-y-Gwynt Cottage
Sleeps 4, fabulous views, flawless luxury. TV, linen, washing machine, power all included.
Tel: 01267 237261
E-mail: anton.y.griew@virgin.net
Accessibility Grade 1

Central Devon: 3 comfortable ground floor manor farmhouse apartments, M2 wheelchair accessible. Picturesque, peaceful situation, on-site coarse fishing. Half mile Crediton, 8 miles Exeter. No smoking/pets. Ideal holiday base. ★★★★ Graded. Tel: 01363 772684, www.creedymanor.com

• Accommodation
Accessible or adapted property to sell or let? Searching for accessible or adapted property? The Accessible Property Register 'Bringing accessible property into the mainstream'. Tel: 0114 2307058, web: www.accessible-property.org.uk



changing lives
reducing crime

making a difference

SENIOR HUMAN RESOURCES ADVISOR

South London

£34,047 p.a. (Including L.W.)

Nacro is widely recognised as a leading edge voluntary sector criminal justice organisation. We have gone from strength to strength and continue to lead the way in crime reduction initiatives. We currently have a vacancy for a motivated and enthusiastic HR professional to join our busy HR team based in South London providing a Service to our Education and Employment Department which has projects UK wide. You will be expected to contribute to the HR Directorate's objectives as well as facilitating good employee relations and advising managers and staff on employment law and good practice. You will be expected to participate in the design and implementation of management training.

To succeed in this role you will need to be CIPD qualified (or equivalent) with at least 4 years hands on generalist experience in a busy HR department. You will need strong interpersonal skills and a sound knowledge of legislation and equality issues. You will need to be confident and sure of your ground as you will often be working alongside very senior managers and trustees.

In return we offer a good salary, flexible working, generous annual leave entitlement and guaranteed continuous professional development.

For an application pack please visit www.nacro.org.uk, email hr@nacro.org.uk or call 020 7840 6737. Completed applications to Terri Allen, HR Department, 169 Clapham Road, London SW9 0PU. Closing date: 18/03/05.

Nacro values the diverse nature of its staff and of those using our services. We will ensure that this is reflected in all our practices, policies and services. We welcome applications from candidates regardless of ethnic origin, gender, age, religious belief or sexual orientation or disability, and from ex-offenders. Nacro is registered charity number 226171.



Disability Action Waltham Forest

PROJECT LEADER – REACHING OUT PROJECT

FULL TIME (36 HOURS PER WEEK) POST. SALARY - £24,114

Incl. London Weighting (Scp 29 JNC)

28 DAYS HOLIDAY PER ANNUM

We are looking for someone to run a volunteering project that will use volunteers to visit isolated disabled and/or elderly people in their own homes and to run a telephone contact scheme.

You will need 2 years experience of working with volunteers in a multi cultural society. Proven experience of designing publicity materials, newsletters and press releases. Experience of supervising volunteers and of working in a project delivering advice and information in an outreach setting. You will also be an excellent communicator and have a real commitment to equal opportunities.

For further details or a job pack please contact:

Pat Bhabha, Disability Action WF, Tel: 020 8509 0812

Email: disabilityaction@disaction.org.uk

Address: 1A Warner Road, Walthamstow, E17 7DY

Closing Date: 16th March 2005

All disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria are guaranteed an interview.



SUNRISE QUICKIE F55, 17" seat, J cushion, headrest, lights/indicators. Excellent condition, £2,250 ono. Tel: 01980 862845.

SCANDINAVIAN MOBILITY DUAL control electric wheelchair with charger and full operating instructions. 25 miles on full charge, variable speed settings with reverse function. Horn, storage under seat. In immaculate condition, recent full service, £490 ono. Tel: 01205 351237.

• Walking aids

DYNAMICO 5 ADULT walking aid, see www.ormesa.it/en Cost £500 new, asking £300 ono. Tel: 01273 275692.

• Accommodation

NEW HOUSE FOR sale, 4/5 beds, 2 en suite (1 ground floor), garage extra wide, garden (raised borders), level pathways, ramps. Scope for further adaptations inside. Half mile to Thameslink station (London 45 mins). 100 yards to convenience store. £340,000. Tel Tony Woolf: 01525 713111.

• Household/family

ACORN STAIRLIFT MODEL 120, straight run, 16 ft rack, 17 steps. With handbook, hardly used, as new. £550 ono. Tel: 01428 641425 (North Finchley).

LINAGE ADVERTS

Due to lack of space on this issue, there is no linage form. To place a linage advert, please use the form in the December issue. Alternatively, contact Patrick Durham-Matthews: Tel: 020 7619 7320, E-mail: patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk

THEATRE / MUSIC / ARTS / MUSEUMS
020 7395 2615
E-MAIL SOPHIE@G-C-A.CO.UK

LONDON
Streets Alive
Theatre Company

ArtsJobs

Company Administrator £23,100 pa. Closing date: 7 Mar 2005
Award-winning company leading the way in education & theatre for the homeless. For info: an A4 SAE (41p) to Streets Alive Theatre Co, 14 Baylis Road, London SE1 7AA. T: 020 7928 6822 or email: info@streetsalive.org.uk Interview: w/c 14th March 2005.

ARTS JOBS APPEARS IN THE GUARDIAN, ASIAN TIMES, EASTERN EYE, THE VOICE, DISABILITY NOW, THE PINK PAPER

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 45)

MACCLESFIELD & DISTRICT
DISABILITY INFORMATION BUREAU
Charity no. 1069163

MANAGER

36hr post NJC scale S01 £22,512 - £24,000
Flexible package (3 year fixed term contract)

The Bureau requires a self-motivated and innovative person to manage and develop our service which provides information on all aspects of disability.

Must have experience of managing resources and people plus previous experience in the voluntary sector.

If you feel you have the qualities and experience to take on this challenge, please send for an application form and further details from:

Disability Information Bureau, Pierce Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 6ER.
Tel: 01625 501759 Email: info@maccdib.org.uk

Supported by



Application closing date: 16th March 2005

The Disability Information Bureau is an equal opportunities employer and we welcome applications from disabled people.

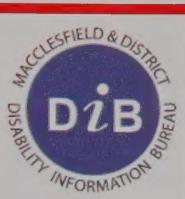
SEND US YOUR SMALLS...

...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £9 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

HOW TO REPLY

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to DN, address on page 2.

• Public appointments (cont'd pg 46)



Working Toward Barrier Free Travel

A unique opportunity is available to join a start-up business dedicated to creating a barrier-free travel environment across Europe. Amhartan is not a travel agency – instead we concentrate on information and advice provision to the travel community.

We are looking for 2 individuals who would be willing to join our team at this early phase of development. These positions will require someone who:

- Has a degree – preferably in business or history/geography
- Likes to travel
- Has strong writing skills
- Has strong interpersonal skills
- Has good attention to detail and likes research

Fluency in one other European language would be preferable but not essential.

If you would like to be considered for these positions, please send your CV or a description of yourself to: Amhartan Travel Services, 21 Huntsmore House, 35 Pembroke Road, London W8 6LZ or cjohnson@amhartan.com

• Courses

GRAEAE missing piece

Graeae is recruiting for Missing Piece 5, a performance training course for aspiring actors with physical and sensory impairments. Course includes:

- * Voice & Singing * Acting Techniques * Improvisation *
- * Dance & Physical Theatre * Acting for Radio & TV *
- * Audition Skills * Central London Showcase *

**Interested in a career in acting?
Audition now for Missing Piece 5!**

For course prospectus and application form contact Ellie Howell ellie@graeae.org t 020 7697 7928 www.graeae.org

Deadline for applications: Fri 27 May 05

Auditions weekend: Sat 11 and Sun 12 June 05

Course dates: Sept 05 – June 06

Missing Piece is supported by the Department for Education & Skills, Learning & Skills Council East, Bridge House Trust, City Parochial Foundation and Regional Arts Lottery Programme (London)

CONDITIONS

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.

Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews tel: 020 7619 7320, fax: 020 7619 7331.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.

Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)

Convener and Committee Members

Are you enthusiastic about transport issues? Do you have a vision of how access to transport for disabled people could be improved in the future? Could you advise Ministers on how this could be achieved and constructively challenge current policy?

The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland provides advice to Scottish Ministers on the transport needs of disabled people in Scotland. MACS can also raise matters itself, and ask Ministers to explain policy and make recommendations for new or different policies.

The Scottish Executive is currently seeking a new Convener and additional members to serve on MACS. Ministers are keen to appoint individuals with a record of achievement in disability, transport and/or local government but applications will be considered from candidates with other relevant experience. You will need to demonstrate that you will contribute to MACS, bring fresh ideas to discussions and think strategically and practically. An interest in and vision for improved access to transport for disabled people and the ability to relate experience gained elsewhere would be an advantage. MACS holds 6 main committee meetings a year plus 6 working group days focusing on areas of transport policy. Meetings will be held in premises with suitable access mainly in Stirling but they may be at other locations throughout Scotland. The Convener will be expected to devote a minimum of 3 days per month and members a minimum of 2 days per month to MACS. Members will not be paid for their work on MACS, but travel, subsistence and other reasonable expenses will be reimbursed. Given the focus of MACS, on issues affecting disabled people, legislation states that at least 50% of the Committee and the Convener should be disabled people. Appointments will initially be for 3 years, although shorter periods of tenure would be considered, renewable at the discretion of Scottish Ministers.

The Scottish Executive is committed to appointing a diverse range of public appointees, reflecting the best of contemporary Scotland and to the principle of public appointments on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. We guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability/health problem that affects the work they can do and whose application meets all the essential criteria for the post.
(For more information about Public Appointments and other vacancies visit the Scottish Executive's website at www.scotland.gov.uk/government/publicbodies). For an information pack please see the contact details below. You should provide your name, address and the vacancy that you are interested in.

Public Appointments, PO Box 7332, Glasgow G51 2ZA. Telephone: 0870 240 1818, Fax: 0870 600 4111,
E-mail: publicappointments@response-handling.com, SMS text message: 0796 013 3181.

Closing date for applications is 24 March 2005 and interviews will be held week commencing 11 April 2005.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
making it work together



Can you
see an
argument
from both
sides?

Lay Members – Employment Tribunals Part time positions throughout the UK

The DTI is looking to appoint Lay Members from a wide variety of backgrounds, who will bring up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the workplace to an Employment Tribunal. It is important that applicants are drawn from all sectors of industry and public bodies.

Employees may bring a claim to an Employment Tribunal on a wide range of issues including unfair dismissal and discrimination, on the grounds of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Perhaps you are or have recently been a trade union officer or similar representative or you may be or have recently been a manager with employment relations responsibilities. No prior legal knowledge is necessary as training will be given, however an understanding of workplace norms is essential.

A minimum commitment of 15 days per year plus up to 4 training days in the first year with the ability to sit for 2 or more consecutive days is necessary. Applicants who can commit to more than the minimum requirement and for lengthy periods are also needed.

Your employer is obliged to allow you unpaid leave up to the minimum required, if you are selected. You will receive a fee and reasonable travelling expenses for each sitting.

Lay Members are under-represented by small business managers and employees, Welsh speakers, women, ethnic groups and disabled people. We therefore encourage applications from all regardless of gender, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

If you are interested in applying you must be a United Kingdom National, Commonwealth citizen or National of the European Economic Area (EEA). You must also have been born on or after 25th October 1938.

You can obtain further details and apply online at www.nrgplc.com/tribunals or telephone 0845 601 2770.

Lines are open from 9th March between the hours of 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 2pm Saturday until Thursday 24th March, after which time you can apply online. Completed application forms must be received by 4pm (BST) on Friday 1st April 2005.

www.nrgplc.com/tribunals

dti
Department of Trade and Industry

NRG
GROUP

POSITIVE ABOUT
DISABLED PEOPLE
INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Can you
see an
argument
from both
sides?

DN
disabilitynow

Look out for the
employment
supplement –
April 2005.

To advertise
Contact:

Richard Gresham
tel: 020 7619 7336
e: richard.gresham@scope.org.uk

**Patrick Durham-
Matthews**
tel: 020 7619 7320
e: patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Members of Academy Trusts

The Secretary of State for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) invites applications for the post of Academy Trust member. This is an exciting opportunity for you to make a difference in your local community and to get directly involved in the Government's drive to transform secondary education and improve educational standards.

Academies

Over the next few years the Government is aiming to establish at least 200 Academies throughout England, including 60 in London. Academies are publicly funded independent schools, established by sponsors from the business, faith and voluntary sectors. They are inclusive schools for local children of all abilities, set up in disadvantaged areas to replace existing failing schools or to meet basic need. Academies are constituted as companies limited by guarantee with charitable status; such companies are referred to as trusts.

The role

Each Academy Trust has to have one member appointed by the Secretary of State and the DfES is now looking to draw up a list of candidates to make appointments from.

Academy Trust members will:

- act in the best interests of the Academy;
- oversee the achievement of the objectives of the Trust;
- attend annual and extraordinary meetings;
- appoint Governors;
- sign off financial documents and annual reports.

The person

Candidates will preferably have substantial experience in education, usually at a fairly senior level. Applications will also be welcome from those with legal, financial, charity or business expertise. Members will need to be able to work well with the other Trust members, including the sponsor and the Chair of Governors.

The position of Trust member is voluntary and part-time. We expect that members will need to commit to 1-3 days per year, although in exceptional circumstances involvement may be significantly greater. The posts are unpaid, although DfES will meet travel and other necessary expenses in full.

DfES particularly welcomes applications from disabled people, members of ethnic minority groups and women.

For further information and an application form please send a postcard with your name, address and the reference AT to:

Mrs Alex Daventry-Claridge at Level 1E, Department for Education and Skills, Caxton House, Tothill Street, LONDON SW1H 9NA
or e-mail your request to Alex at: pba.team@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

The closing date for applications is 21 March 2005.

The DfES is committed to making appointments on merit by fair and open processes.



MISSION PIGGYBACK MK 2

Mission Cycles is giving away a new Mission Piggyback Mk2, worth £169. The Piggyback Mk2 attaches to the back of an adult bike enabling a child to pedal or sit back and relax. The Piggyback Mk2 will tow with no side-to-side movement. It is ideal for children with mobility impairments and special needs and gives parents and children the opportunity to enjoy being out in the fresh air. Age range is from about 4 to 9 years.

For your chance to win, tick Piggyback in the entry form.

Check Mission Cycles website www.missioncycles.co.uk for a dealer or contact them direct on 01622 815678.



STORY BOOKS, A CD AND A VIDEO

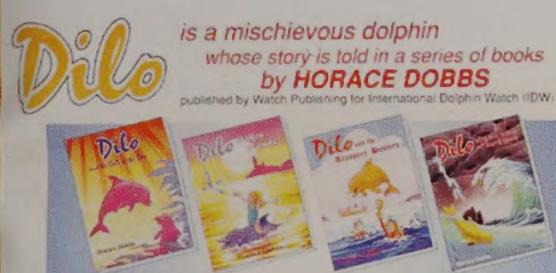
Meeting dolphins is a magical experience. That is why the International Dolphin Watch, founded by Dr Horace Dobbs, is devoted to protecting dolphins, studying them, and expanding the human-dolphin relationship for the benefit of humans and dolphins.

Thanks to Dr Dobbs, a DN reader can win his series of three books, worth £17, and a CD, worth £4.99, about Dilo, a mischievous dolphin who embarks on many adventures. The books are suitable for 6-11 year olds.

DN is also giving away a video, *Sunshine on the Water*, that captures the graceful movements of dolphins and the diversity of the undersea world.

Tick IDW in the entry form to win the books, CD and video tape.

To find out more about the International Dolphin Watch and its range of products visit www.idw.org, contact Jackie Connell on 01908 617318 or email jackie.connell@ntlworld.com



to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send for FREE to Disability Now, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or e-mail the details to: fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk

Piggyback IDW Ramp



terms & conditions

• closing date for entrants: 18.03.05 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates • Winners may be announced in DN • In association with Mission Cycles, Gowrings Mobility and International Dolphin Watch. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winner of the £100 worth of theatre tokens from The Society of London Theatre was E Stowe from Doncaster. The winners of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* Volume Two audiobook from BBC Audio were, in order, J Mayes from Suffolk, C Bartholomew from Buckinghamshire, P Scott from Lancashire, K Heald from Merseyside and R Thomas from Tavistock. The winner of the £50 worth of leisure vouchers was B Cayford from Middlesex.

FLEXILOC RAMP KIT 2

Gowrings Mobility is giving away a Flexilock Ramp Kit 2, worth £105.

This modular ramping system uses polyurethane tiles and can be used by wheelchair users or people with mobility impairments to enter and leave buildings, go through doorways at home and tackle steps. It interlocks to form a tough but flexible semi-permanent solution. It also contains a set of

pre-assembled ramps, which can be used over and over again to overcome obstacles up to a height of 7cm and a width of 75cm.

To win a Flexilock Ramp Kit 2 tick Ramp in the entry form. The Flexilock Ramp Kits come with the peace of mind of a 3-year warranty. For more information on the Flexilock kits, contact Gowrings Mobility on Lo-call 0845 608 8020 or www.gowringsmobility.co.uk

gowrings
mobility

DN next month

All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 28 March.

WISE UP TO WORK

DN's 12-page supplement includes a survey update of disability employment in government departments, plus tips and experiences to help you get or keep a job

SHOPPING FROM HOME

From supermarket deliveries to websites, there are ways to make shopping easier

SEX SURVEY

Results – we hope!

jubilee mobility

Volkswagen Liberty

wheelchair accessible luxury MPV

side lift (including wheelchair driver),
ramp (rear or side) or
lowered floor (61 inches head room)



You choose



Whatever your needs our fantastic new VW Liberty range offers the best value for money ever.

Encompassing :-
* Side or rear ramp
* Underfloor side lift
* Wheelchair driver
* Side by side
* Lowered floor
* Air suspension

Visually stunning & superbly engineered by Jubilee, this truly amazing luxury multi seater offers genuine wheelchair access, without the need for compromise.

Motability

0121 502 2252

www.jubileeauto.co.uk

Jubilee Automotive Group Ltd, Woden Road South, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 0NQ. Opening hours Mon-Fri 9 to 6 pm, Sat 9 to 2 pm.
Prices shown presume exemption from VAT and Disabled Road Tax. Vehicles shown may have optional specification.

